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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, June 8, 2017
(Part A)

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 8, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

●(1005)

[*Translation*]

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: I have the honour, pursuant to Section 38 of the Access to Information Act, to lay upon the table the report of the Information Commissioner for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2017. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

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[*English*]

COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

The Speaker: I have the honour, pursuant to section 66 of the Official Languages Act, to lay upon the table the annual report of the interim Commissioner of Official Languages covering the period from April 1, 2016, to March 31, 2017.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(f), this report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

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[*Translation*]

COMMISSIONER OF LOBBYING

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table, pursuant to section 11 of the Lobbying Act, the annual report of the Commissioner of Lobbying for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

[*English*]

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICS COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: Pursuant to paragraph 90(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, it is my duty to present to the House the annual report of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner in relation to the Conflict of Interest Act for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2017.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canada–Africa Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the bilateral mission in the Republic of Zimbabwe and the Republic of Botswana in Harare, Zimbabwe, and Gaborone, Botswana, from March 26 to 31, 2017.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following two reports of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts: the 29th report, entitled “Report 7, Operating and Maintenance Support for Military Equipment—National Defence, of the Fall 2016 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada”, and also the 30th report of the committee, entitled “Report 5, Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention—National Defence, of the Fall 2016 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to each of these two reports.

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security concerning Bill S-233, an act to amend the Customs Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (presentation and reporting requirements).

Business of Supply

[English]

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with an amendment.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you were to seek it, I think you would find that there is consent to adopt the following motion:

That, at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion in the name of the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Monday, June 12, 2017, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

EATING DISORDERS

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table petitions from individuals across the country who share our growing concern for the millions of Canadians affected by eating disorders, some as young as seven years old.

Despite people with eating disorders having the highest mortality rate of all people with mental illnesses, people with these treatable conditions are left to suffer with unreliable and insufficient care. These disorders are identifiable if one knows what to watch for and the importance of early treatment. Teaching people to watch for these indicators could save a loved one's life.

Eating disorders are misunderstood, inadequately treated, and underfunded, which is why these signatories are calling on Parliament to pass Motion No. 117. The petitioners are asking the government to work with territories and provinces to create a nationwide network dedicated to the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, support, and research of all eating disorders.

The petitioners call on the government to commit to a pan-Canadian strategy against eating disorders.

● (1010)

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition that I would like to share with members that deals with the issue of hospice palliative care, which is an approach that

improves the quality of life for patients and their families facing the problems associated with life-threatening illness.

The petitioners call upon the national government to play a strong leadership role in dealing with this particularly important issue and to look for ways in which we can expand upon it.

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on this important day when the House will be considering an NDP motion on nuclear disarmament, I am pleased to present a petition from my constituents in Victoria.

The petitioners call the attention of the House to Canada's recent opposition to a UN resolution to begin negotiating a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons. These constituents call on Parliament to take a position independent of NATO and the United States, and support a treaty to prohibit the development, production, transfer, stationing, and use of nuclear weapons.

They call on us to set as our goal the elimination of these weapons and to support a framework to achieve that end.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP) moved:

That the House:

- a) recognize the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from any use of nuclear weapons, and recognize those consequences transcend national borders and pose grave implications for human survival, the environment, socioeconomic development, the global economy, food security, and for the health of future generations;
- (b) reaffirm the need to make every effort to ensure that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances;
- (c) recall the unanimous vote in both Houses of Parliament in 2010 that called on Canada to participate in negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention;
- (d) reaffirm its support for the 2008 five-point proposal on nuclear disarmament of the former Secretary-General of the United Nations;
- (e) express disappointment in Canada's vote against, and absence from, initial rounds of negotiations for a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons; and
- (f) call upon the government to support the Draft Convention on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, released on May 22, 2017, and to commit to attend, in good faith, future meetings of the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Edmonton Strathcona, who, I would like to point out, has been doing excellent work on this file. It is an honour for me to share my time with her.

I am truly honoured to rise in the House today to move this motion and talk about the very timely issue of nuclear disarmament.

As the Secretary-General of the United Nations has reminded us, nuclear weapons continue to pose a serious threat to humanity and our planet. Right now, there are approximately 170,000 nuclear weapons in the world, and just one of them could cause unthinkable damage. This problem is not going away. Countries are modernizing their weapons, the new American president wants to increase the strength of his country's nuclear arsenal, and then there are countries like North Korea. That is a major concern.

It is likely because of that concern that the House unanimously adopted the following motion in 2010:

That the House of Commons:

- (a) recognize the danger posed by the proliferation of nuclear materials and technology to peace and security;
- (b) endorse the statement, signed by 500 members, officers and companions of the Order of Canada, underlining the importance of addressing the challenge of more intense nuclear proliferation and the progress of and opportunity for nuclear disarmament;

I will shorten it a little, since I do not have much time.

- (c) endorse the 2008 five-point plan for nuclear disarmament of Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations...
- (d) support the initiatives for nuclear disarmament of President Obama of the United States of America; and
- (e) ...encourage the Government of Canada to deploy a major world-wide Canadian diplomatic initiative in support of preventing nuclear proliferation and increasing the rate of nuclear disarmament.

Canada did not follow through on this major diplomatic initiative. That said, a major diplomatic initiative is being undertaken at the United Nations right now, and Canada is opposing this motion, which was supported by many members across the aisle and adopted by unanimous consent. Not only did Canada fail to take the initiative and support this, but it is actually fighting it, which I find completely unacceptable.

I would really like to know what has changed, exactly, for my colleagues across the way who supported this motion in 2010. Is the current U.S. government pressuring them to not take part in this effort? That would be terrible.

Let me read another text that states:

WHEREAS there are still at least 17,000 nuclear weapons [I cannot remember what number I gave earlier] in the world, whose very existence constitutes an unprecedented threat to the continuation of life on Earth as we know it;

WHEREAS nuclear weapons are the only weapons of mass destruction not yet banned by international agreement;

WHEREAS as a member of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons...Canada has an international treaty obligation "to pursue negotiations" for the total elimination of nuclear weapons...;

WHEREAS the International Court of Justice ruled on July 8, 1996: i) that this [non-proliferation treaty] commitment is a legal obligation under international law, and ii) that it is generally illegal to use nuclear weapons, or even threaten to use them;

BE IT RESOLVED that [in the House, I guess] the Liberal Party of Canada urge the Government of Canada to:

Business of Supply

comply more fully both with its international treaty obligations under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and with the International Court of Justice ruling of July 8, 1996, by playing a pro-active role in achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world;

emulate the Ottawa Process (which led to the banning of land mines) by convening an international conference to commence negotiations for a Nuclear Weapons Convention that would ban nuclear weapons—akin to the Biological Weapons Convention...and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

● (1015)

The motion I just read was adopted by the Liberal Party of Canada last year. Not only are some of the members opposite turning their backs on what they supported in 2010, but they are turning the backs on their own party and supporters. This is quite unacceptable. I have raised this issue in the House several times, and each time I was told that Canada is working on a convention on fissile materials.

I am not opposed to working on such a convention, but I am not sure that this has anything to do with what I am talking about. It is a bit like if I said that this month I was going to breathe so I will not really have any time to eat. We can do both. What is stopping us from doing both?

Two days ago, in her foreign policy speech, the minister told us about the importance of multilateral systems and major international instruments. Here we have a multilateral process involving over 130 countries, and an international instrument, ratified by Canada, calling on all parties to take part in these kinds of negotiations, but Canada is missing in action.

Throughout her speech, the minister talked about all of Canada's great accomplishments. Interestingly, she failed to mention one thing: the anti-personnel mine ban convention, signed in Ottawa. Setsuko Thurlow, a Hiroshima survivor, was here yesterday and showed us books on this convention written in Japanese. It made Canada famous.

I do not know why the minister refused to mention the anti-personnel mine ban convention, but I sometimes get the impression that she is afraid of drawing parallels with the nuclear disarmament negotiations. The situation is quite similar. It is not easy; some countries do not want to participate, but leadership means taking the initiative. While certain countries did not want to participate in the anti-personnel mine ban convention, it created a catalyst, moral suasion and a movement. It is a great achievement for Canada.

With the negotiations under way, we are truly witnessing a historic moment. There is never an ideal time for such a convention, but if we do not start, we will not reach the finish line. Right now there is a momentum that we need to capitalize on. In what little time I have left, I will quote in English the letter signed by 100 members of the Order of Canada, including former ambassadors, a former minister of foreign affairs and former ambassadors for disarmament, calling on the Government of Canada:

● (1020)

[*English*]

It states:

Lead an urgent call to end provocative rhetoric and sabre rattling over North Korea in favour of a return to sustained engagement and negotiations in pursuit of a denuclearized Korean peninsula.

Business of Supply

Urge the US and Russia to publicly reaffirm and act on their “unequivocal undertaking,” as agreed at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, “to accomplish, in accordance with the principle of irreversibility, the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.”

[Translation]

Unfortunately, I will not have the time—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The member will have a chance to elaborate further during questions and comments.

Questions and comments.

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague’s comments, and I congratulate her on her motion, which she moved the same week that we were treated to a grand speech in the House of Commons about the role the government claims to want to play on the international stage.

As we have seen all too often in matters of foreign affairs, and I dare say my colleague knows this better than I, this government is all talk and very little action, and that applies to nuclear disarmament too.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister said there was no need to participate in this process, which he called “useless”, because we are already participating in another process, which is why I would now like my colleague to tell us why there is indeed a need to participate in this one.

Why is it so important for us to engage in this process if we really want to be able to say that Canada is back?

• (1025)

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. This is so disappointing.

President Obama was in Montreal a few days ago. We all remember his legendary words, “We can do it.” In contrast, this government is saying, “We cannot do it.” Words are not enough. What we need is action.

Individuals are awarded the Order of Canada because they have the courage of their convictions, because they have risen to challenges that are not always easy, and because of their extraordinary accomplishments. Over 100 members of the Order of Canada wrote to the Prime Minister to ask him to:

[English]

Respect and support multilateral efforts to rid the world of nuclear weapons by ending Canada’s boycott of the current UN General Assembly negotiations of a treaty to ban all nuclear weapons and by joining the next session of talks (scheduled for June 15 to July 7).

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could elaborate. We know that North Korea has clearly stated that it will not disarm. We know that Iran is working with North Korea. We have seen what is going on with Russia. What strategy would the member have for dealing with those countries that have specifically said they will not, if all the other countries are going to look at disarmament?

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Madam Speaker, based on my experience in foreign affairs, there is never one simple solution to any problem. We must negotiate directly with North Korea and continue to impose sanctions, if necessary.

It is interesting because, initially, North Korea would not take a position on this proposal to negotiate a nuclear weapons disarmament convention, while Canada opposed it. North Korea was a better state player than Canada, in a sense, which is a little worrisome.

Tools like this convention can lay the groundwork for working with other countries, whether they are member countries or not. In fact, NATO has issued a document listing the positive repercussions that such a convention would have on non-signatory countries.

We saw this in the case of landmines. Some countries that were major producers and users of landmines, particularly our neighbours to the south, did not sign the convention, but it nevertheless affected them directly and helped reduce the number of landmines in the world. This is really in the same spirit. That is why it is so disappointing that Canada is not at least at the table.

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to share this time with the former diplomat, and my dear colleague, the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

Yesterday we were honoured to have two very special guests on the Hill, as the member mentioned, who have been tireless advocates for action on one of two global crises the UN Secretary-General has called for action on. One guest, Setsuko Thurlow, a survivor of the Hiroshima bombing, has dedicated her life to ensuring that no other community experiences that catastrophe to humanity.

The first crisis, climate change, the Canadian government is beginning to tackle. The second, the nuclear threat, it is not, yet both crises pose equally significant threats to humanity, both to our environment and to life.

Nations are deeply concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences posed by nuclear weapons. The threat, like climate change, transcends national borders. It has grave implications for human survival, the environment, the global economy, food security, and the health of future generations.

Since my election in 2008, I have become engaged through the Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, a global association of elected officials and civil leaders advocating for nuclear disarmament. A few months back I attended the UN negotiations for a convention on nuclear disarmament. This convention is being premised on the principles and rules of humanitarian law and is considered directly consistent with the binding terms of the non-proliferation treaty.

Despite voting for the motion calling for Canadian engagement in these negotiations, Canada not only continues to boycott this global initiative but is counted among the few nations that last year voted against even commencing the negotiations. Why is this troubling? Canada is a party to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. That multilateral treaty compels our country, along with the other signatories, to negotiate and complete a convention on a nuclear ban.

Business of Supply

Nuclear weapons are the only weapons of mass destruction, as my colleague mentioned, not yet prohibited. Canada played a key role in global actions to ban chemical and biological weapons and landmines, yet our government is boycotting actions to ban nuclear weapons. Do the Liberals not share the global concern that the nine states possessing 15,000 nuclear weapons are determined to modernize or make it easier to deploy those weapons, not dismantle them? What is puzzling is that we have a Prime Minister and a government that claim to the world that they are back at the UN and are committed to a multilateral approach to addressing global crises. They seem to find that of value on climate change. Why not on the threat of nuclear war?

Last March, a majority of nations gathered in New York at the UN to draft a convention on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. I went to New York to observe first-hand these negotiations. What I heard in the speeches by state delegates, including, for example, the Netherlands and Ireland, was profound concern about the threat posed by nuclear weapons and a determination to stand together to call for their prohibition. It is anticipated that a final version of this convention will be completed this July.

In the wake of the government's decision to boycott, I travelled to hear first-hand and was inspired by the sense of commitment among these nations to pursue a common end to nuclear weapons. The very purpose of the UN, as pointed out by UN Secretary-General Guterres, is to prevent war and human suffering. We are reminded in a book by the former ambassador for disarmament, Douglas Roche, that the UN charter begins by saying that the purpose of the organization is "to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace".

Former UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon issued a five-point proposal for nuclear disarmament, including a call to ratify and enter into force a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty. In 2010, this call, as my colleague mentioned, was unanimously endorsed by this place on a motion by the NDP. It called for Canadian engagement in these negotiations on a global convention and for kick-starting a Canadian diplomatic initiative to prevent nuclear proliferation. As my colleague has also pointed out, many have expressed support for this convention, including the Inter-Parliamentary Union, hundreds of Order of Canada appointees, and many former Canadian diplomats.

It is noteworthy that the Liberal Party, at its recent convention, adopted a resolution calling on the government to convene a conference to commence negotiations. That action is already happening, absent the government. What excuse has the government given for refusing to participate in the negotiations? Liberals argue that they are engaged in discussions on a fissile material ban to put a stop to the production of new fissile materials that could be used to make nuclear weapons.

• (1030)

However, unlike the open and transparent process at the General Assembly to negotiate a convention, that process is behind closed doors and requires consensus. There is little likelihood that those opposed, for example, Pakistan, China, Russian, Iran, Israel, Egypt, will agree, and to date have not. These nations, I am advised, have

huge supplies of fissile material, regardless of any ban eventually negotiated for no new production.

It is not too late for Canada to come forward and join world nations in pursuit of this humanitarian action. Negotiations recommence this month in New York. For the sake of our children, for the sake of the planet, we implore the government to step forward to join the efforts of nations threatened by nuclear weapons, not those determined to retain and potentially deploy them.

• (1035)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank both of my NDP colleagues for their excellent remarks, which deserve serious thought.

Something that was said earlier really stuck with me. As we have heard, and the facts are there, on a very important motion, Canada voted against the nuclear disarmament initiative and North Korea abstained, meaning that North Korea's position was better than Canada's.

I have a very straightforward question. Do the NDP members believe that North Korea is a serious, credible country? When it takes a neutral position, should we believe it, yes or no?

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan: Madam Speaker, indeed, my understanding is that Korea is not at the negotiations at the UN, but that has not stopped the majority of nations around the world from agreeing to get together. They hold in common the equal threat by those who hold nuclear weapons and, from time to time, threaten to use them. We simply look to the situation in Ukraine. Even NATO nations are leery to step forward because of the threat of nuclear weapons that could be deployed by Russia.

This is not a reason not to step forward. The reason to step forward is that the government when in opposition voted to proceed and help commence these negotiations. It did nothing, the previous government did nothing even though it voted for that, and the negotiations are already proceeding. Therefore, is it not better to stand with the nations that are trying to move forward on delivering their commitments, their obligations under the non-proliferation treaty, rather than standing back and doing nothing?

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in 2016, Canada rallied 159 other countries to support the fissile material cut-off treaty. This is a concrete step toward our engagement and support of nuclear disarmament. The NDP is calling for us to immediately join this ban treaty and work with countries without nuclear weapons. What we have done works with both sets of countries, with and without nuclear weapons.

Business of Supply

Could the member clarify that or talk to whether she thinks the way in which Canada is going, by taking these concrete steps, is a valuable step toward a world of nuclear disarmament?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Madam Speaker, I spoke to that in my speech. There is nothing stopping Canada from being involved in all the measures to which it has committed. In fact, it is compelled to do so under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. The Liberals voted for it at their own convention and they voted for it in a motion in the House in 2010. There is nothing stopping Canada from being engaged in the process of non-expansion of fissile materials and at the UN. The Liberals claim to be back at the UN, but they are not. They talk a big line. They have gone nowhere on the fissile materials and are unlikely to because there has to be consensus. The very nations that hold these nuclear weapons and want to expand fissile materials are blocking that.

We should continue on that, but at the same time the Liberals can easily be at the UN helping to negotiate this treaty to ban nuclear weapons.

[*Translation*]

Ms. H el ene Laverdi ere (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am amazed that so many Order of Canada recipients have written to the Prime Minister to ask him to stop boycotting the negotiations. Those are their words.

Does my colleague not find that striking? Order of Canada recipients are people who have worked hard, shown great courage, and overcome challenges, even when it was not easy. Is it not interesting to see the contrast between all of those Order of Canada recipients and the government, which thinks that this may not work and will not be at the negotiating table?

• (1040)

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan: Madam Speaker, people do not receive the Orders of Canada, and they should not, unless they have done incredible work in our country on matters that are very difficult to achieve. These are the very people who have stepped forward, as well as our former diplomats, who know how important it is to participate.

What is so troubling is that the government likes to brag that it is brave, that it is taking on the challenge of addressing climate change, and that it is joining nations around the world. However, it is cowering in the face of this nuclear threat. We would like to see the government give equal attention to the two crises facing our planet.

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to discuss our government's position and actions on nuclear disarmament. This is a vitally important issue that affects both Canada and the world. It also comes at a critical juncture for the international community, where our diverging views about the path forward.

Before going any further, I had the great privilege of meeting Mrs. Setsuko Thurlow, a Hiroshima survivor and wonderful Canadian who has dedicated her entire life toward bettering the world and ridding it of nuclear weapons systems.

In that context, let me assure the Canadians that advancing nuclear disarmament in a meaningful way remains a priority for the Government of Canada. Canada strongly supports concrete efforts toward nuclear disarmament. That is why we are taking meaningful steps to achieve nuclear disarmament, which in turn means doing the hard work in real and meaningful results. Members will note that I have used the term "meaningful" three times in two sentences.

We absolutely recognize the great consequences of even an accidental nuclear detonation, which could have catastrophic human impacts that transcends borders, harms the environment, the global economy, and even the health of future generations. Nuclear disarmament should be the goal of every country and of every government. It is certainly Canada's goal. That is why our government is fully committed to pursuing pragmatic initiatives that will lead to a world without nuclear weapons. We owe it our children and to future generations.

Let me remind the House that Canada gave up its nuclear weapons capability, which, in essence, acts as a role model for the rest of the world.

In 2016, for the first time ever, Canada rallied 159 states to support and pass a resolution calling for the fissile material cut-off treaty. With the support of nuclear and non-nuclear countries, Canada is chairing this high-level group to help phase out nuclear weapons, a meaningful contribution.

Recognizing the important work that has been done on the path towards nuclear disarmament, it is more important than ever that we make these pragmatic approaches to this very complex international issue as clear as possible. During the late 1980s and 1990s, the world witnessed a dramatic, almost 80%, reduction to the numbers of nuclear weapons, those primarily held by the United States and the former Soviet Union. A number of countries abandoned their nuclear weapon development programs and joined the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, NPT. The NPT is now almost universal, with only four countries remaining outside of its obligations, which aim at achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

The 1990s also saw the signing of the comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty, CTBT, which prohibits the testing of nuclear weapons. Although still not yet in force, it is being partially implemented. Obviously there are some exceptions. Countries around the world, including those that have not ratified, have already built 116 monitoring stations to quickly identify a nuclear detonation anywhere in the world. While the treaty may not yet be in force, it has effectively established, in essence, a taboo on such testing. Only one country in this century, North Korea, has dared to break this taboo and faced global condemnation.

Business of Supply

In terms of international security, the world does not become a safer place, unfortunately. Crises in Ukraine, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and I could go on for quite some time, continue to undermine regional and global stability. Irresponsible and reckless acts by North Korea, in defiance of United Nations Security Council resolutions and its own international obligations, leaves the global community struggling to contain its behaviour and to assure their populations of their continued security. This is why Canada is taking meaningful steps that will deliver tangible results for all.

• (1045)

[*Translation*]

Many countries, including Canada, believe that this uncertain environment is not conducive to expediting disarmament. Historically, non-proliferation efforts and disarmament, or arms reduction, only occurred when the main stakeholders participated in the discussion. That was true in the case of the negotiations regarding landmines and cluster munitions, to give just two examples.

Significant progress requires a good dialogue and trust between the governments involved in the negotiations. Unfortunately, since that is currently not the case, we need to focus on measures that rebuild that trust and make it possible to open a dialogue.

Other countries believe that the current context warrants a more radical approach to total nuclear disarmament, but such an approach has very little chance of success in the near future. I am thinking of the initiative to negotiate an agreement to ban nuclear weapons. While we obviously appreciate the good intentions behind that initiative, unfortunately, it is not the right approach. We believe that the current negotiations are premature and ineffective, and that they could create divisions and complicate the path to nuclear disarmament.

[*English*]

Let me explain this further.

First, we believe the negotiations are premature because, in the current security climate, countries with nuclear weapons regard them as essential for their security. That is their point of view, and they are the ones that possess the nuclear weapons. It is unrealistic to expect countries to disarm when they face very real threats, including from nuclear weapon proliferators like North Korea. Only when these countries have the confidence in their security, without the need for nuclear deterrence, will they be ready to reduce and ultimately eliminate their nuclear weapon stockpiles. This is a pragmatic and realistic approach.

Second, we expect that the draft convention will be ineffective. Without the participation of states possessing nuclear weapons, it is certain that not a single nuclear weapon will be eliminated through this process. In this context, these negotiations will provide nothing else than a declaratory ban, as the countries participating in them are already prohibited from possessing these nuclear weapons through their obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. In other words, any additional prohibitions that apply only to states party to the ban will not help to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

Further, we are concerned that the treaty does not include credible provisions for monitoring and verification. Countries that are expected to give up their reliance on nuclear weapons will want to

be assured that others are not able to cheat. We have already seen, in the very recent past, a nation that has cheated repeatedly. Unfortunately, the current discussions do not encompass such verification measures. As well, much technical work remains to be done in order for disarmament verification to be credible and effective, and Canada is currently actively engaged in advancing some of this work.

Finally, the proposed treaty is likely to be very divisive. Without any meaningful disarmament or verification measures, it will stigmatize nuclear weapons, with the aim of establishing customary international law prohibiting their use. In order to prevent this, countries with nuclear arms will become persistent objectors.

We all abhor nuclear weapons and their potential to be used. However, if it is going to create a divisive wedge, then it should be thought through extraordinarily carefully. Quite frankly, this is already creating an adversarial dynamic. Instead of striving to seek common ground on mutually agreed objectives, like happened between the former Soviet Union and the United States 20 years ago, this process will only reinforce the differences between nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states, making further progress on nuclear disarmament even more difficult because there will be no continuation of the dialogue.

These concerns are not new. Indeed, Canada participated extensively and constructively in the process leading up to the current ban treaty negotiations. This included active involvement in the three conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and the United Nations open-ended working group on nuclear disarmament. Throughout these processes, Canada worked to shape the dialogue and arrive at recommendations that addressed the security interests and disarmament objectives of all countries. We even hosted our mission in Geneva, a framework forum round table, to facilitate the work of the open-ended working group, with great results. Unfortunately, despite considerable efforts by Canada and others, the working group could not come to a consensus on its final report, and instead established the basis for the United Nations resolution of last fall, which authorized the current negotiations.

It is a long and complicated tale, but the bottom line is that the concerns raised by Canada and many of our like-minded partners were not addressed in the recommendations of the final report from the open-ended working group. We could not therefore support the UN resolution establishing these negotiations. Moreover, as we expect their outcome to be a merely declaratory document targeting important elements of our collective security obligations under NATO, we cannot participate in these negotiations in good faith.

Business of Supply

•(1050)

Canada's approach recognizes that despite a problematic international security environment, there is great opportunity to pursue effective nuclear disarmament efforts over the longer term. The current ban treaty negotiations pit nuclear weapon states against non-nuclear weapon states, forcing both sides to entrench their positions. Leadership on nuclear disarmament demands the opposite, bringing actors together to realize concrete progress where it is possible and not merely driving groups of them apart. This is where Canada has its focus, as do our allies, 41 of which did not participate in the ban treaty negotiations.

What marks real, tangible action? In contrast to ban treaty proponents as suggested by the members opposite, Canada and her allies maintain that nuclear disarmament can only realistically be achieved through an approach that takes into account the views and security interests of all states. Our position is that the most effective approach is a step-by-step process, which includes the universalization of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, a fully enforced comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty, a negotiated fissile material cut-off treaty, and only as the ultimate step, a credible and enforceable convention or ban on nuclear weapons. We must act in a systematic, logical, progressive fashion to tackle this complex and hideously dangerous issue.

[Translation]

In keeping with the 2010 motion adopted unanimously in both Houses of Parliament here in Canada, encouraging the Government of Canada to deploy a major worldwide Canadian diplomatic initiative in support of nuclear disarmament, I am proud to say that is precisely what Canada is doing.

As the Minister of Foreign Affairs said a few days ago, in December 2016, Canada rallied 159 states, including those with nuclear weapons, to adopt a United Nations resolution calling for a fissile material cut-off treaty. Banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear explosives is almost universally recognized as the logical next step.

This resolution establishes for the first time an expert preparatory group, which will develop aspects of an eventual treaty. This group will enjoy input from open-ended, informal consultative meetings with all UN member states. Canada is chairing this process. Under our leadership, the success of the process will be a major step toward nuclear disarmament. The vast majority of countries with nuclear weapons are participating in the preparatory group, which is key to its success.

[English]

In addition to our work in this regard, Canada is supporting work on the technical issues that will need to be addressed in order to establish a credible nuclear weapons disarmament regime. This includes engagement with the international partnership for nuclear disarmament verification, which aims to develop measures for the verification of nuclear disarmament, of which I spoke earlier.

Verification systems and methods are crucial to managing risks and mitigating threats related to weapons of mass destruction, and these, especially for nuclear weapons, are essential for providing assurance that all parties are in compliance with their obligations

under the regime. Doubts and mistrust can and have stalled non-proliferation, arms control, and disarmament talks in the past. Transparency and confidence provided by independent verification can be a true motivator, as seen by the 116 stations of which I have spoken.

•(1055)

Understandably, the global skills and knowledge base for nuclear disarmament verification is limited, resulting in significant capacity gaps. Through, however, a cross-regional partnership of over two dozen countries, including the United States, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, France, and the People's Republic of China, countries are now working collaboratively to develop in detail the measures required to address the technical challenges related to the monitoring of nuclear disarmament and to ensure that disarmament commitments are being faithfully implemented. This is progress.

In addition to providing a nuclear disarmament policy and technical expertise, Canada is finalizing a project, through its weapons of mass destruction threat reduction program, that contributes to the Nuclear Threat Initiative, an organization that is hosting and facilitating a variety of meetings. This financial contribution will help the important work being undertaken through this initiative. Through this financial contribution, we will help the international partnership for nuclear disarmament verification continue its critical work.

We also support Norway's initiative to create a group of government experts on nuclear disarmament verification, one of the most challenging obstacles to nuclear disarmament. Concerted and inclusive action is necessary if we are to make genuine progress.

To conclude, let me reiterate that Canada is firmly committed to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. There is no doubt about it. However, rather than symbolic gestures, which can and will be divisive, Canada is staying focused on the pragmatic and on what will actually achieve concrete results toward global nuclear disarmament, emphasizing efforts that have broad support.

Canada and our allies are supporting practical efforts that will require time and effort, of course, but the outcomes are much more likely to be meaningful, enduring, and effective. Canada's determined leadership on nuclear disarmament initiatives, including on several panels, and on technical issues, such as verification, will achieve the results that will best serve all countries.

Once again, let me be clear. We strongly support concrete efforts toward nuclear disarmament. We welcome them, but we are taking meaningful steps to achieve this, and that means doing the hard technical work to deliver real and lasting results. The work we are currently doing will have a positive impact toward nuclear disarmament worldwide, and it is something to be proud of.

Business of Supply

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member listed all the mythologies that are being presented by Russia, the United States, and now Canada, against participating in the required negotiations for this convention. Canada signed on to the non-proliferation treaty, and one of its obligations under it is in fact to participate in these negotiations, which the hon. member failed to mention.

There is absolutely nothing preventing Canada from stepping forward, like most of the nations of the world, in participating in all of these initiatives, which are required under the non-proliferation treaty. It is interesting that the argument is being made that it is premature for nations to sit down and negotiate a convention to ban nuclear weapons. When precisely is a perfect time? Should it be the same thing as on climate change, because the United States has now pulled out? No, it should not. Canada has said “we are there” even stronger.

The arguments are so specious. I find it an incredible slight to the many nations, including Ireland and the Netherlands, which is a NATO country, who are participating there and speaking from their hearts and doing the hard work to protect the nations that are at risk from a nuclear war.

I wonder if the member could say which camp the Liberals are in. Are they in the camp that believes the only path to security is to have nuclear weapons, or are they in the camp of the majority of nations in the world that are saying the continuance of having nuclear weapons and moving to modernization for easier deployment of them is not the way to go?

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Madam Speaker, in the main, Canada absolutely believes in the principle of nuclear disarmament. As a former soldier, and one who is trained in the NATO systems, and who many years ago took a nuclear fire planning course to employ tactical weapons systems in conjunction with our American allies, I am fully aware of the potential tragic impact that such weapon systems, if ever utilized, would bring not only to local battlefield circumstances but indeed the world.

Having said that, Canada's approach is pragmatic, realistic, and is going to be effective in conjunction with our friends and allies. It is illogical to expect friends and allies who do possess nuclear weapons, and on whose shoulders the whole idea of deterrence has rested for many decades, to actually be able to co-operate meaningfully with those who are just interested in making statements. That is why our efforts, which involve providing technical skills, scarce resources, and money to those technical aspects involved in establishing the frameworks for future dialogue are so important.

Nuclear disarmament is an excellent ideal, but unfortunately, tragically, because of international security conditions and rogue states, such as North Korea, it is not possible over the short term.

• (1100)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a great respect for the hon. member, the work that he did, and his knowledge.

However, when I look at the motion, I do not expect him to answer all of these questions, but in terms of (a) to (e), I would assume that you would agree with those things.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member to address the questions to the Chair.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Madam Speaker, when I look at those first parts of the motion, they are very agreeable. The problem is probably the fourth part of the motion.

In light of the fact, and I know the hon. member would agree with this, that the most horrific thing we have done as human beings is to produce a bomb and a weapon of such total destruction, is this not in the best interests of all of us? I understand the member, and I have listened to his argument that the government believes that this would be an exercise that would be futile. However, is it not in our best interest to do everything possible to rid us of this scourge and plague that has come upon us as mankind? I wonder if the hon. member could answer that.

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Madam Speaker, I would like to remind the House that Canada is one of the very few nations in the world that gave up its nuclear weapons capability. It was the Bomarc system, of which I think most are well familiar. This was groundbreaking. It represented the will, the desire, and indeed the need of Canadians to take a firm stand, all of which was highly admirable.

However, in that context, as members of NATO, we have relied on and stood on the shoulders of others who have nuclear weapons deterrent capabilities, which, for good or bad, I think mainly good, prevented an outbreak of nuclear war until now. Where the nuclear doomsday clock stands in terms of its hands moving toward midnight is a matter of scientific opinion. However, the point is that it obviously has not crossed that threshold of midnight.

In that sense, although it has been a hideous expense, and of course we are well aware of the two tragic utilizations of nuclear weapons under wartime conditions, specifically in Japan, and the horrific casualties that ensued, we have brought peace and stability under a very fractious world system. Unfortunately, right now, international security circumstances are such that those nation-states that do have nuclear weapon systems are probably not going to be convinced in any way, shape, or form by motions through this government to disarm. Instead, we have chosen to put skills, expertise, personnel, and money into those technical aspects.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like my colleague to elaborate on the importance of this responsible approach of engaging countries without nuclear weapons, particularly in the context of the fissile material cut-off treaty, and accountability.

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for the great question and the chance to lay out the pragmatic approach to which she referred that Canada has taken to achieve worldwide nuclear disarmament in co-operation with our friends and allies, both those who have nuclear weapon systems and those who do not.

Business of Supply

Our government believes that in order to convince nuclear powers to get rid of their weapons we must take this step-by-step approach. We are leading on a UN resolution that is doing just that, bringing nuclear powers to the table and working gradually toward disarmament. Not only do we lead through the UN system to make sure we advance toward this goal, we are also taking concrete actions. For example, Global Affairs has a program with respect to the mass destruction non-proliferation treaty with a view to prevent weapons of mass destruction from falling into the hands of terrorists. This program is called, not surprisingly, the weapons of mass destruction threat reduction program, and receives funding of \$73 million per year.

We also support Norway's initiative to create a group of government experts on nuclear disarmament verification, something that is needed. These stations, which I referred to earlier with respect to monitoring, need support, sustenance, networking, and cannot be stand-alone. Without this weapons verification system ability to track explosives, very few of the nuclear states will disarm.

As well, in 2016, for the first time ever, Canada rallied 159 states to support and pass the resolution that my hon. colleague referred to, the fissile material cut-off treaty. With the support of nuclear and non-nuclear countries, this was a first and we chaired it.

•(1105)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have time for a brief question.

The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the member opposite.

Does he not feel it is time to live up to his word and show some leadership? In 2010 a motion passed unanimously, including the Liberals, calling on Parliament to join negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention. As well, in 2016, Liberal delegates voted in favour of a resolution for Canada and a nuclear-weapon-free world, which included the following:

WHEREAS as a member of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)(1970), Canada has an international treaty obligation "to pursue negotiations"...

Despite all this and the fact that Canada signed the treaty and that delegates asked the Liberal Party to oppose nuclear weapons and take part in negotiation, Canada is still standing in the way of negotiations.

Does the member not feel this somewhat contradicts the position of his own party and its supporters?

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Madam Speaker, of course, we support nuclear disarmament agreements.

What my hon. friend is proposing is to negotiate a nuclear weapons ban without those countries that have nuclear weapons participating. That would be pointless. This is not something that would result in real change.

Of course, our goal is nuclear disarmament and we are doing what it takes to achieve it. This means working hard to get tangible results. In this respect, I am very proud of Canada's approach.

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

I would like to begin by taking members and folks viewing us across the country in the safety and security of their homes back to a moment in history: 16 minutes past eight o'clock in the morning of August 6, 1945. That was the instant when an atomic bomb, three metres in length, weighing barely 4,000 kilograms, containing less than 64 kilograms of uranium-235, and dangling from a descending parachute, exploded over Hiroshima, Japan. In that instant, some 80,000 people died in the blazing blast under a rising mushroom cloud of fire and smoke. The co-pilot of the American B-29 bomber, looking back, said to his fellow crewmen, "My God, what have we done?" What the Americans did that terrible day, and with a larger plutonium bomb three days later over Nagasaki, Japan, effectively ended the Second World War and far greater casualties, with Japan's surrender the next week.

We know that, since 1945, although there have been a number of close calls, nuclear weapons have not again been used in conflict. In the early years of the Cold War came the concept of mutual assured destruction, developed as a defence policy during the Kennedy administration. MAD essentially involves the United States stockpiling a huge nuclear arsenal, which in the event of a Soviet attack would have provided the U.S. with enough nuclear firepower to survive a first wave of nuclear strikes and to strike back at Russia and its Warsaw Pact partners. The resulting enduring theory of nuclear deterrence to this day meant that it would be unthinkable for either side to launch a first strike because it would inevitably lead to its own destruction.

Toward the end of the Cold War, 1987 to be exact, Margaret Thatcher said:

A world without nuclear weapons may be a dream but you cannot base a sure defence on dreams. Without far greater trust and confidence between East and West than exists at present, a world without nuclear weapons would be less stable and more dangerous for all of us.

Prime Minister Thatcher then offered a quote by Winston Churchill, and again this goes back to the period just after the Second World War when Churchill said, "Be careful above all...not to let go of the atomic weapon until you are sure and more than sure that other means of preserving peace are in your hands."

Business of Supply

Today, almost three decades after the Cold War ended, and despite the voluntary decommissioning of thousands of nuclear weapons, there are still more than 10,000 nuclear weapons of all sorts, bombs and warheads, worldwide. Eight countries have successfully detonated nuclear weapons: the United States, Russia, Britain, France, India, Pakistan, North Korea, and Israel. We know Iran is close to achieving nuclear capability. Five NATO member countries share nuclear weapons: Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey. The nuclear non-proliferation treaty, ratified by Canada decades ago, aims at “sharing the benefits of peaceful nuclear technology and the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and the ultimate elimination of nuclear arsenals”. However, North Korea left the treaty; Israel, India, and Pakistan have never joined; Iran did join decades ago but, surprise, was found to be in non-compliance and brags today about its dark nuclear intentions.

In the past decade, our previous Conservative government worked multilaterally to improve international nuclear security and to address the threat posed by nuclear terrorism. We worked with our international partners to prevent the acquisition of fissionable materials by any individuals, entities, or countries that might threaten Canadian national security, which brings me to the NDP motion before us. Conservatives do not disagree with paragraph (a) of the motion; we have no doubt of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from the use of atomic weapons.

• (1110)

At the same time, we in the official opposition agree with our democratic allies that possess nuclear weapons as a vital defence deterrent, the United States, Britain, France, and Israel; and our NATO partners that share them, Germany, Belgium, Italy, and the Netherlands, like Canada; which do not possess nuclear warheads. These countries all disagree with the talks to ban nuclear weapons, talks aimed at achieving total nuclear disarmament, which have absolutely no chance of success.

Russia and China, both nuclear powers, both veto-wielding permanent members of the Security Council, are not part of the democracies boycotting group, but they too see no reason to participate in the nuclear weapons ban talks. The Russian foreign minister has said that the 120 countries that are participating in the talks are trying to coerce nuclear powers into abandoning nuclear weapons, and he said it is absolutely clear that the time has not come. As well, President Obama during his presidency held essentially the same opposition to participation in the nuclear ban talks. That is because the world today is arguably in a much more dangerous place than it was during the Cold War and MAD. It is not because of the several hundred Russian and American weapons that are still on what is called hard alert, ready for launching within minutes of a perceived attack, but because of the nuclear weapons in the hands of a belligerent North Korea, because of the nuclear weapons still in development in Iran and that regime's continuing commitment to one day make a nuclear strike on Israel, and because of nuclear weapons at the ready today in Pakistan and in India, not to mention the fissionable material salvaged from Soviet era weapons believed to be accessible to international terror organizations.

While we Conservatives share with the NDP and peace-loving people around the world the dream of a nuclear weapons free world, while we agree that there are a couple of elements in the 2008 UN

Secretary-General's five-point proposal that are still today worth pursuing—such as the call for the establishment of a central Asian and African nuclear weapons free zone treaty, the proposal for greater accountability and transparency by nuclear weapon states in documenting the size of their arsenals and weapons stocks, and continued efforts against other weapons of mass destruction—we in the official opposition do not believe that there is any benefit to participating in a marathon, wishful-thinking talkathon. There are more meaningful ways to work for greater peace and stability, fundamental human rights, and opportunities for those in the developing world and undemocratic states.

While we recognize the idealism of the NDP motion, we do not believe that the current precarious state of the world justifies Canada's engagement in these specific UN disarmament talks to ban nuclear weapons.

• (1115)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciated the comments by the member and remind him that he was probably also in the House, perhaps still a journalist, when his party voted for our motion, for which there was unanimous support, to move toward negotiating this very treaty.

There are already 17,000 nuclear weapons in the world, as the member has pointed out. It is very clear that the fissile material ban treaty has very little opportunity of success. The member has repeated what the Liberals are saying, which is “That is a waste of time, they are just sitting around talking, and we should do credible actions like negotiate fissbans”. However, what they are not telling this place is that the very ones who hold the nuclear weapons are refusing to sign on and are very unlikely to sign on to the fissban treaty. So much for concrete action.

Surely the member does not believe that a sound reason to refuse to participate in the ban negotiations is that Russia feels threatened by these nations who are in fact threatened themselves by the fact that these nuclear weapons continue to proliferate.

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Speaker, as I say, we recognize the idealism of the NDP motion. With regard to the first part of her question and the symbolic unanimous consent on December 7, 2010, I was in Parliament. I was not in the House. I have voiced my concerns and reluctance to support unanimous motions at any time, except in the most exceptional circumstances, and this was another one. It was a unanimous motion put by Bill Siksay, a former NDP colleague, after question period, at 3:45 in the afternoon, when the House had fewer members than it has at this moment. It was a symbolic motion. It was a motion that supported the dream we all share of a world one day free of nuclear weapons, but it is unrealistic to expect today.

Business of Supply

Not to trivialize this matter, but the reason our democratic allies are refusing to lay down all their nuclear weapons today, the reason our historic adversary, Russia, will not lay down its, is the unpredictability of the new nuclear states and the nuclear rogue states. It comes down to the rather trite saying, “You don't bring a knife to a gunfight.”

For the foreseeable future, we have to contend with a—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to allow time for another question.

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the horrors of war are very well documented. Being a member of the Canadian Forces and having participated in parades with war vets, I get a very clear vision of many of the horrors that took place during WWII.

There is a role for government to play. Last fall Canada played a leadership role with 159 other countries in bringing forward a UN resolution that brings nuclear powers to the table to work pragmatically toward disarmament through a fissile material cut-off treaty. I wonder if the member would provide his thoughts on that.

• (1120)

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Speaker, as I said during my remarks, we recognize the government's action to contain fissionable materials and to work for further decommissioning the still huge arsenals that exist in Russia and the United States. We recognize that many of the former Soviet republics, such as Ukraine, Belarus, and others, voluntarily relinquished their nuclear weapons, laid them down. Our previous Conservative government worked to achieve those same ends.

These talks will continue, I regret to say, for years, I believe, but there is no reason to not continue with meaningful talks with our nuclear-possessing democratic allies, and the others, in the enduring hope of one day having a nuclear-free world.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is indeed a—

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Madam Speaker, in the last round of questions, you did not come back to the Conservatives. We heard from the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona in her speech this morning. After two other speeches, she had lengthy questions, which prohibited others from standing and asking questions.

When the Liberal member gave his speech, you made the full circle and took a Liberal question. When we came back to the Conservative member, we had the NDP again stand and give a mini-speech, which prevented the Conservatives from asking their own member a question.

Just for further and future—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the member for Battle River—Crowfoot that when

the Liberals did their round, there was 10 minutes for questions and comments. These have been 10 minutes, with five minutes for questions and comments.

When it is five minutes for questions and comments, we generally have time for only two questions. Because it is an NDP motion, the NDP get first crack at the questions when it is anyone else, except them, making the speech.

I have a clock. I try to be extremely fair. The member will also remember that there was a statement made by the Speaker in the House that basically indicated that when it is that party that is delivering the speech, the opportunity will be afforded to the other members to ask the questions first, in all fairness.

The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I rise today to join with my colleagues, the Conservatives, especially the foreign affairs critic, the member for Thornhill, who clearly articulated why this motion is unrealistic.

I know that New Democrats have a utopian view of the world. They would like to get to a peace-loving and homogeneous situation where everyone gets along. It is very unlikely that we will ever get to that state. We know that there are many bad players out there today. We have worked for a long time to try to reduce nuclear weapons, but an all-out ban, which the conference in the motion the NDP has brought forward is calling for, is unattainable.

The Conservative government worked hard over its 10 years to reduce the number of nuclear weapons in the possession of foreign governments and other international actors. It worked to prevent not just nuclear weapons but chemical weapons and biological weapons because of the traumatic effect they have on the lives of the innocent.

There have not been nuclear weapons on Canadian soil since 1984, and that goes back to the work done by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and the Conservative government of the day to make sure that nuclear weapons were no longer stored on Canadian soil. Since then, government after government, Conservative and Liberal, have signed treaties and international agreements at the UN and with a number of organizations, including NATO, the G8, the International Atomic Energy Agency, and the Conference on Disarmament, to reduce the number of nuclear weapons available in the world.

We definitely need to work on stopping proliferation, but that is not happening. We need to work at reduction. That worked for a while between Russia and the United States, but now we are seeing the number of nuclear weapons increase.

Of course, we all want their eventual elimination, but this is not Shangri-La. We have to continue to drive ahead to try to reduce nuclear proliferation and to make sure that fissionable materials are not there for rogue states and terrorist organizations to get their hands on to produce nuclear warheads. The reality is that we cannot do it through an all-out ban. That is why the agreement the NDP is asking the government to support is unrealistic. Our NATO allies, western democracies, and the major UN nations that possess nuclear warheads are not participating in these talks. What is the purpose of it, then?

I am a member of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, an organization that represents more than 80 parliamentarians from 80 countries. It is something I am proud to belong to. However, it is about stopping proliferation, and that is not happening.

As I mentioned, the threat environment is still there. Not only is North Korea continuing to test its ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads but Iran still desires to produce its own nuclear warheads, and of course, aim them at the state of Israel, the United States, and other western allies. We know that the Iranian regime has the ability to ramp up its nuclear production, nuclear testing, and ballistic missile development in a very short period of time. The P5+1 agreement that was signed, which released all the cash held in escrow by the international community against the Iranian regime, did not take away Iran's ability to produce nuclear warheads. All it did was pause it, and Iran mothballed 85% to 95% of its production capacity. It can very quickly ramp up its testing, development, and ultimately, the use of a nuclear warhead.

● (1125)

I also have to point out what is happening in terrorist organizations. All we have to do is look not just at the proliferation of nuclear warheads but the proliferation of cruise missiles. In the conflict we see today in Yemen, the Houthi rebels are fighting the Yemen government that is supported by Saudi Arabia. They came into possession of cruise missiles. We are talking ballistic cruise missiles that have the capability of carrying nuclear warheads. They fired a cruise missile at a U.S. destroyer, not once but twice, and the U.S. navy was able to take out the truck from which they launched it.

People need to realize that we need the ability to defend ourselves. When our major partners, the United States, France, Great Britain, and Israel, possess these nuclear warheads and the ability to shoot them down, then we have to be aligned with them. As was pointed out by the member for Thornhill, other members of NATO also hold the same position.

We also have to look at the threat environment because of President Vladimir Putin from Russia. The Russian state continues to rattle its nuclear sabre. Putin has been bragging about having the most nuclear warheads in the world. He has also said that he wants to move nuclear warheads into areas where he wants to protect the Russian population. In 2016, he said, "We need to strengthen the strategic nuclear forces". He wants to put them in Crimea. He wants to put them in the Baltic states in the Russian oblast of Kaliningrad, which is nestled right in there with Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia. We are putting our troops into Latvia as part of our NATO mission. He said that he would do it, that he had talked with colleagues and

Business of Supply

told them that it was their historic territory, that Russian people lived there, they were in danger, and they could not leave them. He is going to put in nuclear warheads to do that.

That is one of the most telling factors of why we need to have deterrence measures, not just by putting troops in Latvia, not just by providing air policing, not just by having more NATO members spend more money on national defence and our collective security. It means that some members of the NATO alliance need their own nuclear weapons so it does not become a one-sided fight.

If the western democracy and NATO allies took away all of our nuclear weapons, as the member for Thornhill said, "You don't take a knife to a gun fight", it is more like what we would call surrender. We need like power and the ability to defend and deter, first and foremost. That is what nuclear weapons were used for in the Cold War and in the recent past.

There was success under the Reagan administration to reduce the number of nuclear weapons. Ukraine of course gave up all of its nuclear warheads. Unfortunately, Russia today, under Vladimir Putin and his oligarchs and his kleptocrats, continues to move forward with investments in developing more nuclear warheads.

As has already been pointed out, nuclear powers like the United States, France, the U.K., South Korea, Turkey, Russia, China, and almost 40 other countries have boycotted the negotiations for such a treaty because it is naive and it is unattainable. It is also at a time when North Korea continues to try to launch its own ballistic missiles with the capability of carrying nuclear material.

Ballistic missile defence has matured. The technology is great. It is effective to deal with North Korea, or Iran, or a non-state actor firing up a ballistic missile. However, it cannot deal with a bombardment of nuclear weapons from China or Russia. For anyone who thinks there is a shield out there that can protect North America from incoming nuclear weapons from Russia or China, I am sorry to say that it is not possible. There are not enough interceptors in the U.S. arsenal or in the arsenals any of our allies to shoot down that many warheads. It becomes a situation where we need the deterrents and our own potential of threat by our allies to possess these nuclear warheads.

I will close with this quote from the U.S. ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, who said this about these talks:

We would love to have a ban on nuclear weapons, but in this day and time we can't honestly say we can protect our people by allowing bad actors to have them and those of us that are good trying to keep peace and safety not to have them.

It is just about balance. We need to continue to have that to reduce the risk.

● (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his intervention.

Business of Supply

I have a question for my colleague regarding his highly pessimistic arguments about a nuclear-weapons-free world. It is strange to be insulted as being too idealistic and wanting an ideal world. My question is about agreements similar to the one on chemical weapons, which are regulated by several international agreements.

In the case of chemical weapons, my colleague supports preventing their proliferation and use. There are consequences for countries that use them, such as Syria.

When it comes to nuclear weapons, why would it not be possible to sign similar agreements in order to prevent their use? Can he tell me why agreements work in one case but not the other?

• (1135)

[English]

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, biological, nuclear and chemical weapons have similar effects. They are all weapons of mass destruction.

Main states within the UN Security Council already have agreed to reduce, eliminate, and ban chemical and biological weapons. Our problem has been with the minor state actors, like Bashar al-Assad and Syria and how he has used chemical weapons. Even the Russians denounce it whenever that has occurred, although they often try to deflect and blame other people for using those chemical weapons.

When the main world powers are in agreement, things become a lot easier. We do not have that with nuclear weapons. We have a situation where China and Russia, in particular, continue to build up their arsenals, not reduce them. There needs to be a balance there.

The nuclear option must be the last resort in any national defence talks, and only be used when all else fails. I pray that never, ever happens. As Canadians, as a government, whether it is Conservative or Liberal, we will have to do what we have always done in the past, which is use diplomatic means to assist world powers in the de-escalation of conflict and work with our allies and partners on the non-proliferation of nuclear arms to ensure they are effective, safe, and responsibly used.

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for highlighting the importance of engaging with our partners and allies that possess nuclear weapons. That is the only way to work toward nuclear disarmament. Could the member please explain what consequences could take place from failing to engage our partners and our allies?

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, the treaty that the NDP wants Canada to sign on to is absent of our allies, is absent of powers that possess nuclear warheads. There can be no discussion or dialogue when they are not at the table.

We can do a lot of things, such as the Sergei Magnitsky law. That can be brought in and there can be sanctions. There is global isolation on those state players and individuals that are responsible for the proliferation of nuclear warheads. There is the opportunity to continue to work through the G7, to work through NATO, and OSCE, as organizations that bring more pressure upon those nations that refuse to participate.

Through economic sanctions, through travel bans, through active engagement with our allies, we can ensure that countries that refuse to be responsible partners on the world stage are isolated, countries like the Russian Federation, Iran, and North Korea that continually try to upset the balance of power, trying to redraw international boundaries, and sponsor terrorism in other parts of the world. We have to be more engaged from a principled point of view, which is to isolate them on a global level, sanction them when needed, and ensure they act and behave responsibly.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today on our NDP opposition motion and to stress the enormous opportunities being lost for Canada to play a role. It is the role that the Prime Minister alluded to when he termed “Canada is back”.

On the idea that Canada stands on principle for human rights and human security issues, whether it be development, nuclear armament, disarmament, environmental protection, and the advancement of human rights, Canada has never attempted to impose a solution. The crux of the argument today is this. The way to impose solutions is not a hard stance approach. It is to work creatively and publicly to bridge conflicting positions so solutions emerge collectively. In the international community, that is of the utmost importance. People who are elected and placed in the highest of these positions have a role and responsibility to fulfill those kinds of responsibilities. That is why they get paid the big bucks.

The exertion of ideas strengthens the notion that together we can create what has been called a middle power. The idea that we can work and build on the elements of soft power versus hard power needs to be finessed. It is being dismissed over time because might is right.

I will take the rest of my time today to talk about how we restore a human rather than a mechanistic response to the instruments of mass murder. Nuclear weapons are just that.

The idea of nuclear weapons or human rights is a values debate. I hear this idea being brought up today. It is being turned into a very simplistic debate about might versus right. One member even quipped in his speech “you don’t bring a knife to a gunfight”. This indicates to me that I need to spend more time talking about the crux of the matter and the importance of engaging in treaty obligations, being active participants, not sitting on the sidelines. That way, we play a key role in the future. By saying we do not want to have to sit and pay attention and do some of the nuancing and finessing required to be active members of this exclusive club, which is now emerging, because it is too much trouble, and we will just dismiss it as Shangri-La, is concerning. It would be funny if it were not so poignantly disastrous. We need to think about what really happens with nuclear weapons.

Business of Supply

We are having a values debate that civil society has already had and is being very persistent about. There is a way that we can be aggressive with this insistence for placing human rights first. How can all of us reconcile our moral and spiritual values for human rights, knowing that the horrible consequences of such weapons are at the very crux of whether we are active participants in our treaty obligations? That means sitting and participating in discussions.

We need a reminder every so often of exactly what a nuclear weapon does. Earlier a member quipped “the NDP are idealistic” and “you don't bring a knife to a gunfight”. This is alarming.

• (1140)

There is a clear and utter lack of comprehension about what we are talking about. To suggest that we should not trouble ourselves with partaking in international treaty obligations because there is no Shangri-La, as one member stated, is naive. That is actually unattainable.

I am going to segue into another aspect of my speech, and at this time, it is appropriate for me to stress again that I will be splitting my time with the member for Sherbrooke.

To equate this issue with bringing a knife to a gunfight, to me, suggests that there is a need in this place for an unvarnished understanding of nuclear destruction, nuclear famine, nuclear winter, and nuclear mass murder. Unless nuclear weapons are abolished, these are the realities we are talking about.

Rather than using finesse, rather than developing our relationships and building bridges, rather than tapping into diplomacy and the art of consensus, rather than understanding and using our soft power, and there is a lot of talent for soft power here in this place so we know we have the capability to use it, to suggest that, instead of doing that, we would not partake in discussions because somebody else has a nuclear weapon that they might use is such a false logic that it is very saddening for humanity.

It was Carl Sagan who first coined the term “nuclear winter” decades ago. This was when people were starting to describe the unvarnished descriptions of the devastation and destruction of a nuclear weapon. We have to thank astounding and exemplary advocates like Setsuko Thurlow, who was here yesterday, a Hiroshima survivor. People talk about the incredible waves of heat and that people drop instantly like flies and then some of them writhe like worms that are still alive. These are actual descriptions. I am paraphrasing the actual wording of people who have given testimony on nuclear destruction.

However, a lot of people do not realize that the term “nuclear famine” talks about the aftermath because it is not just in that moment. Nuclear famine refers to the starvation that would ensue after a nuclear explosion. Even a limited nuclear war in one region, for example, would result in millions of deaths, firestorms with soot rising up into the troposphere, cooling temperatures, and a significant decline in food production.

Now we would have a famine. We would have mass migration, civil conflict, and war, not only because of resources that are being destroyed but because what resources are left are being competed for.

A “nuclear ozone hole” describes another consequence of nuclear war. Soot from burning cities in a nuclear war would severely damage the Earth's protective ozone layer. Large losses of stratospheric ozone would permit more ultraviolet radiation to reach us, with severe consequences, such as skin cancers, crop damage, and destruction of marine phytoplankton. The effects would persist for years.

My point is that the ripple effect of nuclear destruction has only been talked about in very distant terms. We need to bring the humanity back. If we do not do that, we will never have a meaningful debate in this place about what it would take and what the substance would be of our role in a treaty obligation, instead of dismissing it and saying, “Oh, somebody else has this weapon, so we're not going to be bothered.” That is what it boils down to for me.

Let us understand this so that from now on, as we debate today, we can actually be talking about what the crux of developing our soft power would be, how we can finesse our talents as diplomats here, how we can—

• (1145)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the member's time is up. Perhaps she could continue during the questions and comments period.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, while the member did spend a fair bit of her speech responding to the member for Thornhill, I will ask a question that I would like her to think about, or give us her thoughts and comments on, with respect to government policy.

We on the Conservative side, and I hope all of us, are deeply concerned with the issue of nuclear proliferation: the proliferation of delivery systems, the proliferation of fissile material, and the proliferation of the capacity to build a bomb. I would like the member's comments on that. I would like to know what she thinks of the current government's response so far to this threat, particularly with regimes such as North Korea and Iran, which have expressed their intention to acquire nuclear weapons for use against other people in the world.

• (1150)

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Madam Speaker, I was collectively responding to some of the comments that were made. However, these are attitudes that I knew had to be addressed from the beginning.

The question is also a good example of why that needs to be addressed, because we are skirting the issue. Of course that has to be addressed. Of course we have to be active and play an active role in that. I applaud that. However, we have to go one step further because we are out of the loop. We are not optimizing the work that we could be doing with respect to innovation, and becoming the vanguard leaders we could be. We cannot do these things if we are not in the loop and part of all of these other progressive discussions that are happening to advance this. We have to have this holistic approach.

Business of Supply

This is what has been happening. It is being split and categorized because it is so incredibly difficult. I get that. What we are saying is to let us work together and take it one step further. We cannot skirt the issue and have a debate on one aspect of it, in one room, and not include the other people in the discussion. It is an isolating factor. I think we could be optimizing the initiatives that are boldly taking place that I do applaud.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Government of Canada has been active and proactive. Canada has led 159 countries in bringing forward a UN resolution that brings nuclear powers to the table to work pragmatically toward disarmament through a fissile material cut-off treaty. That is being proactive and taking a tangible action and moving forward. We are very much concerned about it, and we are seeing actions taken by this government.

What time frame does the member across the way believe we are in with respect to a nuclear-free world? When does she believe that will take place?

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Madam Speaker, that is the kind of question that can only be answered with true and full-on participation. If we want tangible results, if we think we are being active as a government, then we have to be able to go all out and participate in all of these different aspects.

The talking points presented through that question are why, in our opposition day motion, we have included section (e), which states, “express disappointment in Canada’s vote against, and absence from, initial rounds of negotiations for a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons”.

That being said, expressing that disappointment means that we see that there is a hopefulness and that we need to optimize the opportunities that are taking place right now. This is something that can be done. It is feasible. It is not Shangri-La. The importance of our having a full and expansive participation does not negate the work that is being done, but we have to see some tangible results when we are doing this all together. Ultimately, I can give you a timeline once we are actively participating in those talks. Therefore, support—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that she is to address her comments to the Chair and not to individual members.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Sherbrooke.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today in the House to speak to the important issue of nuclear disarmament and the nuclear issue in general. This issue is important to all members no matter what they have said about it. There seems to be consensus for a world free of nuclear weapons. However, there seems to be a divergence of opinions among Conservatives and Liberals on how to achieve that.

This is a fine example of how we can work constructively as members in the House. I was elected to do constructive work.

I am pleased to take part in this debate and support the motion moved by my colleague from Laurier—Sainte-Marie. The hon.

member for Edmonton Strathcona and my colleague worked hard to move this motion today. I thank them because this is a good example of constructive work by the opposition; we are proposing something instead of always opposing things. This is a good example of the good work that the NDP does to advance ideas and propose tangible measures, in this case on the nuclear issue.

In my opinion, this is one of the most important issues for humanity. This is about the survival of our species and that of every other species on earth. This is a sensitive topic for me given all the many victims nuclear weapons have claimed around the world in the past—a not so distant past, at that. One victim would have been too many, but tens of thousands of people were affected and continue to be affected. The fallout from these weapons can still be felt years, generations after they were deployed.

I cannot begin to fathom why states and governments continue to fund nuclear weapon development, on top of defending the notion that this is a question of self-defence and, as such, countries should be able to keep stockpiling these weapons and fighting fire with fire. Amassing even more nuclear weapons is not really the way we want to go.

The current narrative seems to almost encourage nuclear proliferation. Countries produce nuclear weapons in the hopes of protecting themselves, fearing one will be used against them. That does not make sense to me. Continuing in that direction is much too dangerous. I am not an expert on the topic, but I assume that states with these weapons have adequate means of protecting them.

There is nonetheless a risk that these weapons could fall into the wrong hands. Some could decide to use them in the near future. Knowing that those weapons could fall into the hands of very ill-intentioned people is a major concern for our country, for the entire world, and for me.

Clearly, one has to be of ill intent to use nuclear weapons. There is no way to use such weapons for good, but some might use them anyway. These weapons falling into the wrong hands would certainly put humanity in jeopardy. The danger is real, as we have seen other types of weapons fall into the hands of terrorist groups. That is why the possibility of nuclear weapons falling into such hands is so worrisome.

● (1155)

I am also very surprised today to see the Liberals using the same argument the Conservatives used regarding international agreements to fight climate change. They claimed that these agreements would be of little to no value without the participation of major powers like China and the United States. That was the argument used by the Conservatives on climate change. That was also the reason we withdrew from the Kyoto protocol. They claimed it would be ineffective without the major players.

Today, the Liberals are using the same argument. They say some people like to sit around the table to discuss important topics and dream, but that, in the end, it changes nothing. If we had had the same attitude about climate change, we would never have had an agreement like the Kyoto protocol, much less the Paris accord.

We will never make any progress by constantly saying that we will wait for someone else to start the work before joining in. That is a very disappointing attitude from the Liberals. They wait for others to do the work and for the biggest players to sit at the table and, in the meantime, they leave the real power in the hands of the other powers.

As a country, we can work constructively on negotiations. That is why we propose that Canada return to the table to do constructive work that will finally show results. That is what we did with climate change, and we are all happy that this worked and led to the Paris accord.

We must have the same vision and work together, as we did on climate change. We were able to bring almost all powers to the table, and that actually gave results.

I would also like to point out that there are other types of treaties, such as those on chemical weapons. The Conservatives and Liberals say that an agreement on nuclear disarmament would never work, while the chemical weapons treaty shows that the work was quite effective. We can therefore draw on the work done in that negotiating forum to ban the use of chemical weapons and punish those who use them.

I humbly propose that the House examine this issue and draw inspiration from what has been done on that file. We were able to bring the major powers to the table and they agreed to ban chemical weapons. That is certainly something that the members can draw on.

The Minister of Foreign affairs said that Canada wanted to engage anew in multilateral and international forums, naming almost all of them, and go against the approach of the Conservatives, who primarily favoured bilateral relations. Well, today, she has the opportunity to engage in multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament.

• (1200)

Now we are told that it is not necessary and that it will not work, when two days ago the Minister announced that she wanted to engage anew in multilateral forums. There is therefore a contradiction. I hope that the Liberals will act on that new engagement by the Minister and support this motion to engage in negotiations.

I would be pleased to answer questions from my colleagues.

• (1205)

[*English*]

Ms. Kamal Khara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is strongly supporting concrete efforts toward nuclear disarmament. We are taking meaningful steps toward achieving it .

In 2016, for the first time ever, Canada rallied 159 states to support and pass a resolution calling for the fissile material cut-off treaty. With the support of the nuclear and non-nuclear countries, Canada is chairing this high-level group to help phase out nuclear weapons. That is real action that will have a positive impact towards nuclear disarmament.

We need all our allies and all our partners at the table to make this happen. The immediate ban is an empty process that excludes

Business of Supply

essential players and may actually set back nuclear disarmament. Would the hon. member not agree?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed to hear once again what I have just denounced in my speech. The government uses the same arguments as the Conservatives on the issue of climate change. They say that, if the essential players are not there, it serves no purpose. If the United States and China are not part of the agreement, it will achieve nothing.

Well something was finally achieved, because people had the courage to do it and to go all the way in the case of agreements such as Kyoto and Paris. It is also because leaders, like Canada, played an important role.

In this case, Canada could again become a leader on the nuclear weapons file, tackling another important problem for humanity. We currently see that the Liberal government has decided to throw in the towel and leave it to others. Once again, they reiterate what the Conservatives said: leave it to others, it does not concern us, and we wash our hands of it.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Sherbrooke, who has a great interest in this topic. He documented his speech very well and I am proud that our party is raising this topic before the House. Indeed, we can obviously agree on one thing: there is frustration with the previous Conservative government. Canada has always had a reputation of being a progressive actor that strived for healthy agreement between the major countries. That leads me to ask my colleague a question.

How can we explain that this government has decided to adopt this incredibly short-sighted approach? It withdraws from such discussions, which are necessary and progressive, with partners who are equally short-sighted. Is it just a terrible error in managing priorities or is it simply very dangerous doublespeak?

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. It is hard for me to explain what the Liberals are saying today. In this case, they have simply decided to drop the ball. However, the Liberal Party should have been a leader in these discussions.

It must also be remembered that the members of the Liberal Party themselves supported the same type of request that we are making today, to engage anew in negotiations. It is really too bad to see the government MPs decide to reject their members, their volunteers, and the people who help them during election campaigns. Those people adopted a resolution at the 2016 Liberal Party convention. Today, the Liberal MPs decided to turn their backs on their members and their opinions. I find that totally unacceptable.

I am very surprised to see the Liberal Party reject all of their members in that way, members who had supported a motion similar to ours. Some will be very disappointed, particularly those who sponsored such a resolution at the Liberal convention.

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 1962, for 13 days, the world was at the brink. I was very young at the time. I was unaware of developments. Therefore, I, like many children, was spared the angst that no doubt others who were more aware of the situation, parents and other adults, were experiencing. Fortunately, a terrible Armageddon was avoided, but tensions around nuclear weapons continued throughout the Cold War. During the 1980s, for example, children, and I believe my own wife, in fact, when she was in high school, protested against nuclear weapons. Films like *The Day After* impacted individual and collective psyches as well.

Today we are in a very different situation, but there are nuclear tensions with rogue states like Iran and North Korea. Therefore, the permanent goal, if we are ever to have global peace of mind, is the elimination of nuclear weapons. However, it is a daunting task, which to many may seem unattainable. It is a daunting task because the nuclear powers also happen to be the permanent members of the Security Council, for example. When we think of the U.S., Russia, Britain, France, and China, they are all among the first nuclear powers, and they are the permanent members of that international decision-making body.

The challenge, however daunting it may be in the short term, does not deter activists and proponents of disarmament, like Judith Quinn, one of my constituents, Judith Berlyn, another Montrealer, or the late Joan Hadrill, who was a constituent of mine. Many years ago, she created a very small organization called WIND, West Islanders for Nuclear Disarmament. Joan Hadrill's favourite maxim was drawn from Margaret Mead, the cultural anthropologist: "Never doubt that a small group of...committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Joan Hadrill had that printed on her business card.

Earlier this week, we heard a visionary foreign policy speech from the Minister of Foreign Affairs. She emphasized the importance of international law for maintaining a stable and peaceful international order. She also mentioned that, as a middle power, Canada's greatest influence is not through economic or military might, but through the pursuit and application of legal instruments which provide small powers a measure of equal protection with larger ones, even superpowers.

Nowhere is the pursuit of legal international instruments perhaps more crucial than in the area of nuclear arms control. As a middle power with a strong humanitarian tradition and track record, Canada is well placed to be a moral voice and practical advocate for a world that is free of nuclear weapons, and to work for that goal through international legal arrangements. Let us not forget the role we played in bringing the land mines treaty to fruition. It is also true that as a principled and ambitious middle power, we can contribute to the attainment of meaningful international objectives, including in the area of peace and security. We can do that if we act wisely and strategically, among other things to maintain credibility with the actors whom we wish to influence toward a good and noble end. Indeed, this is how we are acting on the nuclear weapons front.

We are acting concretely to advance the disarmament agenda. In 2016, Canada rallied 159 states to support and pass a resolution

calling for the establishment of a fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group, which is an essential step towards a ban treaty.

● (1210)

We have also rallied the support of 166 states to pass a resolution creating a group of government experts to carry out an in-depth analysis of treaty aspects. This is important groundwork. We also supported Norway's initiative to create a group of government experts on nuclear disarmament verification. Verification, as we all know, is one of the most challenging obstacles to disarmament. All of these things that we have done in the international sphere in attempting to eliminate nuclear weapons in the long term are crucial steps. They are building blocks. We could say that Canada is helping to engineer and build the foundation of a nuclear weapons ban treaty.

There are a number of benefits to a fissile material cut-off treaty. I will read four very briefly. First, restricting the quantity of fissile material available for use in new nuclear weapons programs or for existing ones would be a significant tool for combatting horizontal proliferation, which means the spreading of nuclear weapons technology between countries, and vertical proliferation, which means the advancement of existing nuclear weapons technology in an already-nuclear state.

The second benefit of such a treaty would be limiting the pool of available fissile material, to reduce the risk that terrorist groups or other non-state actors could acquire these materials, thereby enhancing global nuclear security and preventing nuclear terrorism. Third, the fissile material cut-off treaty would also advance nuclear disarmament by providing greater transparency regarding the fissile material stockpiles of states possessing nuclear weapons. A future multilateral nuclear disarmament agreement will require a baseline of fissile materials by which nuclear disarmament efforts can be measured. By establishing this necessary baseline, the fissile material cut-off treaty would be the critical foundation of future multilateral nuclear disarmament agreements.

Finally, the FMCT would promote non-discrimination in non-proliferation and disarmament. In particular, and this is very important, a prohibition on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons could apply equally to the five non-proliferation treaty nuclear weapon states, the 185 non-proliferation treaty non-nuclear weapon states, as well as the four states that remain outside the NPT framework. Those are the benefits, the concrete tangible benefits, of a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Business of Supply

If we wish to maintain influence in the international community, we must work with allies and Security Council members like the U.K. and France, who at this point are not part of current negotiations toward a nuclear weapons ban. Perhaps Canada can slowly lead these nations in that direction over time. Could we do more? The Prime Minister has repeatedly said that better is always possible. I encourage Canadians like Judith Quinn and Judith Berlyn, inspired no doubt by the example of the late Joan Hadrill, to continue to advocate and push the government to work toward a nuclear weapons convention that would ban nuclear weapons.

At the end of the day, in a democracy, true to Margaret Mead's maxim, persistent public attention and pressure on any given issue is the only way to move that issue forward. It is important that committed and concerned Canadian citizens continue to draw public attention to the need for progress on nuclear disarmament and continue to remind our government of its duty to work toward this vital objective. We must keep this issue alive in the newspapers and in communities across the country. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that the nuclear disarmament debate, unfortunately, is not front and centre in the media these days, but that should not stop Canadians, especially committed Canadians, from taking part in assiduous efforts to keep the issue burning.

• (1215)

Meanwhile, our government must pursue a focused, step-by-step, realistic, concrete strategy within international institutions to create the building blocks and the foundation that are necessary if we are, in the long run, to achieve a nuclear weapons ban treaty.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, no less than the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Nakamitsu, has just expressed this concern for exactly the position the Liberals and the Conservatives are taking.

She is concerned with the resurgent drift back to Cold War era positions, including the rhetoric about the utility of nuclear weapons, and is concerned about arguments to shelve discussions on nuclear disarmament until the climate improves. She says it lacks credibility. She is saying that it is not a vague hope or aspiration but a concrete contribution to a safer, more secure world, to come forward and participate in these negotiations.

No one on this side of the House, in my party, is disrespecting the actions taken by the government on the other aspects of the nuclear proliferation treaty. What we are saying is that the government is refusing to come to the table on this piece that it actually voted to move forward on, and its members support, which the United Nations is asking them to come forward and support.

• (1220)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, it has been a while since the hon. member and I have had a chance to work together on a committee, but we did very good work at the environment committee a number of years ago. We produced some good reports on some important energy and environmental issues.

No one is suggesting that discussions should not go on toward a nuclear weapons ban treaty, and I do not think the reason Canada is not participating in those discussions at that level in that forum is a financial one. We can always afford to send somebody to be part of those negotiations.

Canada is taking a strategic approach here, which is that as a middle power we want to build relationships and credibility, especially with those nuclear powers that are we are going to need to bring into a nuclear weapons ban treaty in the future.

There is some merit, in terms of building credibility and building Canada's image as a credible and effective middle power, to having a focused approach, which at the moment should be on the fissile materials cut-off treaty. We gain a lot of credibility by focusing our energies and our efforts and working with the nuclear powers in that context.

Obviously the ultimate goal is to have a nuclear weapons-free world. We want to be part of that process. The step-by-step approach has merit in and of itself.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did not hear any mention of Iran in the member's speech. One of the best ways to stop nuclear proliferation, to make sure that we march one day to disarmament, is prevention.

I am not in agreement with the government's position on how it is dealing with Iran right now. However, in the government's conversations with the Iranian regime, one of the most tyrannical regimes there is, with regard to human rights and exportation of terror, is it pressuring the Iranian regime to stop its nuclear program, to make sure Iran is not added to the list of countries that have nuclear capability and can harm others?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, the Iranian regime is a problem, of course, in many regards. The world has been seized of the danger of that regime acquiring nuclear weapons.

I am not privy to the diplomatic discussions that go on between Canada and Iran. I do not think it was particularly constructive to pull our consular officials out of Iran. We saw that the previous U.S. administration worked very hard to have a constructive dialogue with the aim of preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

At the end of the day, dialogue must always be a part of any strategy for dealing with any kind of danger. I am sure the government, the foreign affairs minister, and our consular officials, being as professional and as wise as they are, understand that.

• (1225)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could comment on Global Affairs' move toward dealing with weapons of mass destruction. There was the funding for the threat reduction program of \$73 million. There are different ways the government tries to ensure that we have a more peaceful world going forward. One of those ways is through Global Affairs and the whole issue of weapons of mass destruction.

Business of Supply

Perhaps he could provide some of his thoughts in regard to how important it is that we look at it in a broader view of other types of weapons, and that there are budgetary measures there to ensure Canada continues to play a leadership role. That would be the core of the question, the importance of Canada's leadership role in these important matters.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member brings up a good point. While the focus today is on nuclear weapons, there are other weapons of mass destruction that are actually causing havoc today in certain conflict zones. There are weapons like chemical weapons, which to our horror, have been used in the Syrian conflict.

A global strategic approach to the nuclear weapons issue would have as a corollary a need to focus on all weapons of mass destruction, and therefore, we can bring all of those issues into our diplomatic dialogue with nations around the world, especially those that have these weapons and might be tempted to use them.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments and the sincerity with which he spoke. We have a lot in common about our wanting governments to move forward and get to a time in the world, which I have not lived in, where the threat of nuclear war is absent.

I was disappointed yesterday when the Prime Minister referred to the talks at the UN, of folks around the table, around a treaty to ban nuclear weapons, as sort of useless. That term is not helpful. There are more than 120 countries around the table. We are asking the government to be there to play a leadership role.

I would ask my hon. colleague to encourage and advocate that we acknowledge that every single effort any country makes that moves us forward on a ban is important, and that he continue to advocate within his party so that Canada could be at that table providing leadership.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, what I think the Prime Minister was trying to say is that, if we want to make a tangible short-term contribution to advancing this issue, there is a lot of merit in focusing on the fissile material cut-off treaty at the United Nations level. Obviously, in diplomatic circles there is constant and ongoing discussion about all issues, and whether we are part of the more than 100 nations that are discussing a nuclear weapons ban, or whether we are not, I am certain that our officials and NGOs are very present at the international level in discussions of all kinds around a nuclear weapons ban.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

I would like to dedicate my remarks today to the late Dr. John Bury and his wife Betsy Bury, both local constituents of mine who have been working for peace for the past 60 years. Their efforts, a lifetime of dedication to peace and particularly nuclear disarmament, were recognized and honoured in our city when the couple were awarded the 2014 Joanna Miller Peace Prize.

The Joanna Miller Peace Prize in Saskatoon was established in 2013 to honour the late Joanna Miller for her years of activism, for peace, both within the Saskatoon community and globally as well. She was the president of UNICEF Canada, an active member of Project Ploughshares, and of particular note, because of the

conversation we are having today, a special adviser on disarmament to the Canadian delegation to the United Nations.

Both John and Betsy were veterans of World War II. Because of this shared experience, they realized we must work for peaceful resolutions to world conflicts. They were longtime active members of the Saskatoon branch of Veterans against Nuclear Arms.

Betsy no longer has John by her side. John died at the age of 92 this past Christmas. The Saskatoon community will miss John and his thoughtful, well-researched letters to the editor in the *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*. I know Betsy and many others in my community will continue to work for peace and disarmament in his honour. Therefore, it is a privilege for me to rise today to have an opportunity to speak to the opposition day motion and of course support it wholeheartedly.

I am sure my colleagues in this House have noticed that all around us, frantic preparations are under way for the big Canada Day party that will be held on Parliament Hill in a couple of weeks. As Canadians celebrate our nationhood and the country we call home, it behooves us to also reflect on our role on the world stage, past, present and future. It is a matter of immense pride to Canadians that we have worked for peace, an end to apartheid, and disarmament, no matter the party in power.

It is true that Canada has lost some stature over the last decade or so. With the election of the Liberals in 2015, we heard the claims that Canada was back. Sadly, it does sound like another piece of empty rhetoric. Canada cannot be back if we continue to boycott the talks for a nuclear ban treaty.

In the much-anticipated “reveal” of Canada's new foreign policy direction, the Minister of Foreign Affairs stood in the House and trumpeted that Canada would chart its own course, no longer in lock-step with the United States, and in defiance of President Trump's wishes if it went against the best interests of Canada.

The Minister mentioned the United Nations last after mentioning nine other multilateral forums the Liberals would support. There was absolutely nothing about the threat of nuclear weapons in her entire speech. Is this really how the government intends to win on the UN Security Council?

If Canada is to get a seat on the UN Security Council, we need a campaign that is bold, global and pertinent. Leading a global effort on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament should be a cornerstone of that campaign. Instead, there has been a deafening silence and a refusal to attend negotiations for a nuclear ban treaty.

Business of Supply

The need to act on nuclear disarmament is clear. Nuclear weapons threaten our collective existence, especially in the hands of non-state actors, such as Daesh, also known as ISIS or ISIL, and belligerent countries, such as North Korea. The financial cost to build, maintain and refurbish nuclear weapons is totally unsustainable. The proliferation of nuclear weapons also raises the risk of false alarms that could lead to inadvertent use.

• (1230)

In the late 1980s and 1990s, incredible global progress was made in the reduction of nuclear weapons, leading to a period of peace and prosperity, then the momentum was lost in the early 2000s following 9/11.

In 2007, there was a resurgence of optimism with a surprisingly idealistic op-ed by George Shultz, William Perry, Henry A. Kissinger, and Sam Nunn. Titled “A World Free of Nuclear Weapons”, this bipartisan offering pleaded with the world to get serious about nuclear disarmament. This was followed in April 2009, by President Obama’s historic speech in Prague that echoed President Reagan’s vision, and then UN Secretary Ban Ki-moon’s five-point plan on the subject in August of that same year. Sadly, since that time we have seen very little, if any, progress.

The world needs leadership and action on nuclear disarmament and Canada more than any other country is well positioned to move things forward. It is important to remember the political and historical capital we have to make a significant impact on nuclear disarmament. As a country that has never developed nuclear weapon, we have some credibility. As a G7 nation and a member of NATO, the Commonwealth, and the Francophonie, we have global connectivity. We have some of the best experts in diplomacy, science, and verification of nuclear weapons. No other country can make these claims.

In the face of this challenge are we ready to put forward serious ideas that will allow Canada to take its place at the UN Security Council and contribute to a more stable world? I hope and think the answer must be yes.

Yesterday, I was honoured to listen to a survivor of Hiroshima, Setsuko Thurlow, speak and advocate for a world without nuclear weapons. We all know the powerful and destructive impact these weapons have. Every high school student studies the end of the Second World War, and every August, we remember the victims and events that led to the use of these devastating weapons.

We live in a world where nuclear arsenals are multiplying. Ninety-five per cent of nuclear weapons are held between the United States and Russia. Furthermore, other nations strive to obtain these weapons as a measure of strength. Nine nations, including our allies, hold over, as has been mentioned but it is worth mentioning again, 15,000 nuclear warheads. A single one can kill millions of people and destroy the surrounding environment for decades.

We lived through the fear that permeated the Cold War and now live in fear of non-state actors acquiring these weapons. Unregulated, uncontrolled, and unmonitored nuclear development leaves Canadians, leaves our world, vulnerable.

In 2010, Parliament unanimously passed a motion to seek a way to negotiate an end to nuclear weapons. The majority of countries in the

world are really fed up with the foot dragging on disarmament and they are orchestrating an end run around the nine nuclear states. The UN negotiations are a long-sought breakthrough for the disarmament community and the countries that feel held hostage by weapons they do not possess.

Former parliamentarian Douglas Roche, like many in the Canadian disarmament community, said that there was only one thing wrong with the UN talks, “Canada isn’t taking part. “I see this exercise in very positive terms, and it’s shocking that Canada is not going to participate.”

The two greatest security threats in our world today are cyberwarfare and terrorism. The proliferation of nuclear weapons makes it all the more likely that somewhere, eventually, a country’s system will be without the cyber-defence measures needed to protect it from attack. All the more likely is that a nuclear weapon will be lost or stolen and end up in hands that would choose to use it.

I am looking for the government to lead again in the world community towards peace and nuclear disarmament. If ever there were a time and a place for Canadian leadership, it is now, at the UN, at the table, negotiating a ban on nuclear weapons.

I implore all Canadians, the majority of whom believe in a ban, to contact their MPs and talk to the government so we can once again take a seat at that important table.

• (1235)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for mentioning Setsuko Thurlow. I first heard her in New York and she inspired me to bring her here so those on the Hill could also hear her words. She was a survivor of Hiroshima and told the story of her young nephew who was reduced to a cinder. It reminded everyone, who gave her a standing ovation to her, and all nations of the world of the sad incident in Aleppo. I think it will wake up more people if they hear Setsuko.

I wonder if the member could speak to the fact that the UN representative in disarmament is speaking out and chastising nations that are saying that it is just a specious, non-concrete action to come together to negotiate the convention. She has said that negotiating a convention is the best path. She says, “Disarmament breeds security. It is not a vague hope or aspiration but must be a concrete contribution to a safer and more secure world.”

Does the member agree with the position of the UN official?

• (1240)

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for sharing those very timely remarks on the value of being at the table to work toward concrete actions around the ban on nuclear weapons.

Business of Supply

We heard some Conservative colleagues talk about us being idealistic. On the other hand, I also heard another one of my Conservative colleagues say that they were praying that an accident never happened. I would agree. We are also praying that nothing like that happens.

However, there is nothing more concrete than to look back over the years and say that nothing mattered or that all of those talks were not important. If people always came to the table and said that not everyone was here or that it would take a long time, that is now how we have moved forward, particularly in the area around peace and disarmament. It is important, as my colleague mentioned, to be at the table, to lead the way, and not to fall into that false logic of if they are not there, we are not there. Canadians expect our government to lead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her very informative speech on the issue of nuclear disarmament, which is extremely crucial right now.

We know that there are over 17,000 nuclear weapons around the world and that they cause humanitarian, environmental and public health devastation. We cannot allow their proliferation, especially since Canada signed the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty, which came into force in 1970.

How is it that the Liberals are now using the same arguments as the Conservatives, that we cannot get involved because the major countries are not there? I think the member just said it. This is not a valid reason. The United States withdrew from the Paris agreement, but Canada has shown leadership and said it will continue to press forward.

Why are the Liberals unable to stand up on this issue, when last year their own delegates voted for a resolution calling on Canada to take a stand, show leadership, and join nuclear disarmament negotiations?

We should remember that in 2010, the House unanimously voted in favour of such action. How does the member see this lack of leadership from the Liberals?

[*English*]

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for bringing up a point that many of us are making. Many of us in the House today are wondering what is going on. We can lead, remain a part of the Paris agreement because it is important, and we know why we are there. This is equally, if not on par with that. We cannot say that we will not be there because others are not. We can lead, and must lead, in both places if we are to find a world that is safe and a better environment for all.

• (1245)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to stand to speak to Canada's role in peace and security and restoring our reputation on the world stage. I thank my New Democrat colleagues who initiated this debate and everyone who is participating in it today.

Where we must start is that human rights are not optional. If the government wants to show that Canada is a leader in human rights, then it needs to ensure that we are indeed walking the talk.

Canada was once a leader on nuclear disarmament issues. I honour the shoulders we stand on. When I was a young woman in Toronto, I was especially inspired by the work of Dr. Rosalie Bertell and Ursula Franklin, women with amazing minds who worked very hard to push Canada to take the important action we needed to on the world stage. However, the international community is now negotiating a nuclear weapons ban convention, and Canada is boycotting the process. It is a shameful position. With this, Canada has effectively removed itself from nuclear disarmament diplomacy.

We do not understand how Canada can “be back”, in the words of the Prime Minister, on the international scene when we are turning our backs on the most important international negotiations in years. Arguably, with the election of U.S. President Donald Trump, who has pledged to increase the nuclear arsenal in the U.S., and the troubling actions taken by North Korea, the threat of nuclear war is so present on the international stage right now that it is even more important that the international community work together at this time.

The world is watching Canada. This motion today gives the government an opportunity to reaffirm Parliament's support for nuclear disarmament. We certainly hope cabinet will follow, in line with the motion, to re-support Parliament in that initiative.

On the waterfront of Nanaimo, one of the communities I represent, there is an annual honouring of the anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing on August 6. Members of the Women's International League for Peace & Freedom, a long-standing activist organization across the country, with particularly strong roots in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, were talking about the UN vote that was coming up at that time on nuclear disarmament. They shared my optimism that given the campaign commitments the Liberal Party had made on peace, security, and restoring Canada's international reputation on the world stage, our Prime Minister was going to direct Canada to vote in favour of negotiations to end the nuclear weapons trade. We were all stunned when Canada voted against negotiations for a global treaty banning nuclear weapons. It was seriously a shock to all of us.

These negotiations have been called for by former UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon. Sixty-eight countries voted in favour of the motion, so Canada was completely outside the international consensus. The vote was called the most significant contribution to nuclear disarmament in two decades by one of the UN member countries, and Canada was not on board.

That vote by the Canadian Liberal government also flew in the face of a 2010 resolution of this House encouraging the Canadian government to join those negotiations. I will talk more about that in a few minutes. I want to say what a sad point it was that government did not follow through. Now that is has the power, why would it not carry through with that commitment? It would have made us all proud on the international stage.

Business of Supply

We want to move forward in a more positive way, and there is even more United Nations consensus that Canada could move on theoretically.

Canada's responsibility in this area is particularly strong. At a session that two of my New Democrat colleagues hosted yesterday on the Hill, I was reminded of Canada's special responsibility with respect to nuclear weapons. The bombs that fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were made from uranium that was mined in Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories. It was refined in Port Hope. As well, Canada has sold CANDU reactors around the world, which have a unique design capability that makes them particularly susceptible to nuclear weapons uses. They are of course not designed for that. It is a design flaw and an unintended consequence. This is how Pakistan and India got the bomb. It was by using Canadian power-producing technology.

● (1250)

Our responsibility is deep. We are reminded by the CCNR, the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility, in the summary of a book written in the eighties, that:

Through its dealings with other countries, Canada has played a major role in fostering the proliferation of nuclear weapons [around] the world. This brief history concerns itself with Canada's involvement as a supplier of nuclear reactors and uranium, leading to both "vertical proliferation"—the ever-accelerating competition for bigger, better, faster and smarter bombs among existing nuclear powers—and "horizontal proliferation": a more insidious process whereby dozens of national and subnational groups are slowly but surely acquiring a nuclear weapons capability.

CCNR has been raising the alarm on this for decades, and the danger is greater for us right now.

It is powerful to be reminded of the human toll when a nuclear bomb falls on a community. Yesterday we heard the testimony of Setsuko Thurlow, a Canadian citizen but a Japanese schoolgirl, age 13, when the bomb fell at Hiroshima. She said that there were mostly children, women, and elderly people who were vaporized, incinerated, contaminated, and crushed in the wake of the bomb at Hiroshima, again, that Canada was complicit in.

She described her four-year-old nephew transformed into blackened, melted flesh. She said the family was relieved when he died. It is an appalling image she has carried her whole life. She said they made a vow to their loved ones at that time that his death would not be in vain, that all the deaths in her community would not be in vain.

Now, as a Canadian citizen, she says she is deeply disturbed by the absence of the Canadian government at the negotiations. She said she felt betrayed by Japan, of course, but also by her adopted country of Canada.

We have a responsibility to honour Canada's complicity in this and also the opportunity we have to enter the negotiations and make ourselves proud again on the international stage.

As New Democrats, we have been asking the new Canadian government to participate fully in the nuclear weapons ban multiple times since September. It has consistently hidden behind the excuse that it is working on the fissile material cut-off treaty, which is important and related but is not a nuclear weapons ban. That is what we are holding out for, and this is what we have the opportunity for on the world stage right now.

We had a unanimous vote of the House in 2010 committing Parliament to take this action. We had a very powerful vote by the Liberal Party at its last convention just a short time ago. It campaigned on this issue also.

The Liberal government has made multiple promises that are not being upheld. At a time when Canada is proclaiming its commitment to peace and security, its commitment to the United Nations, we see, on this side of the House, that Canada is not honouring its commitments to the United Nations. It is not too late, though. I urge the Liberal side to vote in favour of this motion to move forward in good faith, to have the country move forward, and for us to do the right thing collectively.

Please let us make Canada proud on the world stage again.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a mischaracterization to suggest that anyone in the House is not completely opposed to the use of nuclear weapons. It is simplistic logic to say that because we do not support a full ban treaty, which none of the countries that have nuclear weapons are participating in the dialogue on, we somehow are not against nuclear weapons. We all want a world that is free of nuclear weapons, and that is why Canada has been leading the world. The fissile material cut-off treaty is something Canada is charring. Canada is leading the world. We led 159 other countries to support this. That is going to prevent the availability of the explosive material in nuclear weapons.

We are focused on non-proliferation. We are working with our allies. None of our key allies are part of this discussion. We need to be realistic and look at what will accomplish the goal. What will accomplish the goal is a step-by-step approach and the leadership Canada and this government are taking.

Would the hon. member please comment on the steps the government is taking in the world on non-proliferation and the fissile material cut-off treaty?

● (1255)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, with all the talent in the House, including my friend, who I know has been involved in United Nations work for a lifetime, I know the government can walk and chew gum at the same time. These are both important, but they do not replace each other, and that is why the United Nations is taking both tracks. Canada's presence at one table but not the other is inconsistent with positions of this Parliament and with resolutions passed by the Liberal Party itself.

Business of Supply

In relation to the argument that there is no point in Canada joining in negotiations without the participation of all nuclear states, Canada itself is not a state that has nuclear weapons, but that has not prevented it from being involved in other processes. All international negotiations worth their salt are difficult and have to bring members in. The Ottawa treaty on land mines took political will. The creation of the International Criminal Court had people outside and inside the process. Nevertheless, it prevailed. Work on the Kimberley Process took political will, and not all states participated in those negotiations, but we got results. Canada was proud to be a participant in all those processes. Canada, in every case, adopted an ambitious approach and took the lead on the international stage.

The process my colleague describes is one element, but it is not a nuclear weapons ban. That is the negotiation happening right now, and Canada, to our embarrassment, is outside that process.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Sherbrooke has time for a very quick question.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I will be brief. I would like his opinion on the Liberals' double-talk. On one hand, the Minister of Foreign Affairs delivered a wonderful speech saying that Canada is re-engaging on the world stage, in multinational forums such as the United Nations and so forth. On the other hand, a few days later, we hear that the forum on nuclear disarmament is not important and that Canada will not get involved in negotiations.

Could my colleague try to reconcile these two views, that of re-engagement announced by the minister and of disengagement from negotiations?

[English]

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, it is not too late for Canada to take this step. The negotiations start again in another couple of weeks. Canada would be lauded the world over. We were reminded yesterday that a great number of Canadian NGOs, in the absence of the Canadian government, have been participating in the negotiations. The statement by the International Committee of the Red Cross supports Canada being involved. Mining Watch, Project Ploughshares, and a lot of experts in Canada have been fighting this fight for a long time. Were Canada to step back into it and take full responsibility, it would be well supported and lauded on both sides of the House.

• (1300)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the very hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

It is an honour to rise in this venerable House to speak on a topic of great importance, not only to the residents of my riding of Davenport, but to Canada, and indeed the world. Before I give my prepared speech, I want to say that on the surface, by the government not supporting this NDP motion, it seems that the government is saying we do not support nuclear disarmament, that this is not an issue of great importance to the government. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The federal government, which I am proud to be a part of, is strongly supportive of taking concrete action toward nuclear disarmament. We are taking a leadership role and meaningful steps toward achieving a world that is free of nuclear weapons. The bottom line of why we are not supporting the motion is that we think the current discussions on this convention are premature. I will give more context over the course of the next nine minutes about why we are on the current path we are on today, and why engaging this draft convention is not the right step at this moment.

In 2008, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon outlined his signature five-point plan addressing the topic of security in a world that is free of nuclear weapons. I am going to outline those five points in his proposal, because we are largely following it. We believe it is the right step-by-step approach toward a nuclear arms free world.

The first point he outlined is that all parties to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, especially the nuclear weapons states, should fulfill their obligation to enter into negotiations on effective measures leading to nuclear disarmament. He suggested the negotiation of a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention. He circulated and updated a document called the "Model Nuclear Weapons Convention" to UN member states earlier that year. This model convention was 80 pages long, with 20 articles, and five separate indexes. It was quite extensive, and it outlined the use, possession, development, testing, deployment, and transfer of nuclear weapons. Most importantly perhaps, it would mandate the internationally verifiable dismantlement of nuclear arsenals.

In contrast, the draft convention on the prohibition of nuclear weapons, which is currently what we are talking about, and currently under negotiation at the United Nations, is a mere eight pages long. Unlike the comprehensive convention that I just mentioned, the proposed convention concentrates primarily on legal prohibitions. It contains no provisions to eliminate even a single nuclear weapon, or any verification measures. Moreover, as mentioned, no nuclear weapon states are participating in these negotiations, because they do not take into account the current international security context of Russian military expansionism, or North America's testing of nuclear devices and ballistic missiles, designed to threaten the whole Asia-Pacific region, including North America. Sadly, this convention is premature and will be ineffective in advancing tangible nuclear disarmament.

Let me be clear: Canada strongly favours the negotiation of a nuclear weapons convention or ban, but as the final step in a progressive step-by-step approach to nuclear disarmament. We believe that there needs to be three other steps first: the universalization of a nuclear non-proliferation treaty, entry into force of the comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty, and the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty. We believe these are mutually enforcing steps and mutually enforcing instruments. This approach aims to halt the spread of nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive testing, reduce existing nuclear weapons and fissile material stockpiles, and build the trust and confidence to verifiably and irreversibly eliminate nuclear weapons.

Business of Supply

This is why Canada, last year, led a very successful UN General Assembly resolution to establish a high-level expert participatory group, to clear the path for the eventual negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty, or FMCT, to ban the production of the explosive materials used in nuclear weapons. By pursuing the important technical work of a FMCT in the 25-member UN preparatory group that we chair, Canada hopes to be able to present the conference on disarmament with draft treaty provisions that will enable this body to commence negotiations on this important agreement.

● (1305)

The Secretary-General also identified the need for more investment by governments in disarmament verification research and development. I am pleased to let Canadians know that the Government of Canada has actively responded to this call by providing expert input to the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification.

Officials and experts from Global Affairs Canada, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, and the Canadian Nuclear Laboratories are making important contributions to addressing the technical challenges of nuclear disarmament verification. This important work is aimed at building global nuclear disarmament verification capabilities. It is essential for the successful implementation of a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention and is a key element of our pragmatic step-by-step approach to disarmament.

I am also pleased to announce that Canada, through Global Affairs weapons of mass destruction threat reduction program, has just provided a financial contribution to help support the work of the international partnership over the next year. Not only are we saying that we are getting engaged, not only are we actively involved in it, but we are actually funding this commitment.

The second point of the Secretary-General's five-point proposal was his call for the nuclear weapons states to assure non-nuclear weapons states that they will not be the subject of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

These assurances are also known as negative security assurances, NSAs. Canada has been a proponent of such guarantees. We are the leading participant in the 12-member non-proliferation and disarmament initiative, NPDI. We have worked closely with our partners to develop ideas in the form of papers, and to promote these assurances in the international arena, most recently in the 2017 preparatory committee for the 2020 nuclear non-proliferation treaty review conference meeting in Vienna in May.

The third point in the Secretary-General's plan is a very important one. It calls for existing nuclear arrangements and agreements, like the comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty, CTBT, which prohibits the testing of nuclear weapons, for instance, nuclear weapons free zones, and strengthened safeguards, which need to be accepted by states and brought into force.

In support of this approach, the former minister of foreign affairs joined the ministerial meeting of the friends of the comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty at the UN General Assembly in pointedly calling for the remaining eight states to ratify the agreement immediately to bring it into force.

For our part, we have passed legislation to implement the CTBT when it enters into force, and we have completed the installation of 16 monitoring stations as part of this agreement.

The fourth point that the Secretary-General made is on his call for nuclear powers to expand the amount of information they publish about the size of their arsenals, stocks of fissile materials, and specific disarmament achievements. Members will be pleased to hear that Canada has taken a leading role in promoting greater transparency by the nuclear weapon states in their reporting of their nuclear weapons stocks. Within the non-proliferation and disarmament initiative, Canada has developed a standard reporting form, which we are asking nuclear weapon states to use for their regular reports on the implementation of their nuclear disarmament obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

We firmly believe that reporting is an effective instrument for increasing transparency on nuclear disarmament activities and for greater accountability. More needs to be done, of course, and Canada and our partners in the NDPI are committed to working with the nuclear powers to improve their reporting through concerted follow-up efforts.

The Secretary-General's final point is that in addition to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament efforts, complementary measures are also needed. Such measures include the elimination of other types of weapons of mass destruction, for example, chemical and biological weapons. New efforts need to be undertaken to prevent weapons of mass destruction terrorism; limit conventional arms; and ban new types of weapons, including missiles and space weapons.

Canada is a leader in pursuing these types of efforts. The government is making good on its commitment to accede to the Arms Trade Treaty, and investing \$13 million to allow Canada to implement the treaty and further strengthen its export control regime.

Canada is firmly committed to achieving a nuclear weapons free world. In conformity with the UN Secretary-General's five-point plan, we are pursuing a pragmatic step-by-step approach aimed at building the necessary confidence and trust needed for nuclear weapons to no longer be considered necessary for security.

I am proud to be able to say today that Canada is continuing its long tradition of leadership on disarmament issues, including strongly supporting this five-point plan.

● (1310)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see so many people participating in what I consider a very important debate.

Business of Supply

We are glad that the Liberal members are noticing the five-point plan by former head of the UN, Ban Ki-moon. That was the plan that was endorsed by the Liberals and all those in the House. What they are failing to notice is what the current head of the UN and the majority of people in the world are saying, which is that they are no longer confident in the step-by-step approach. They want action on all of the commitments under the non-proliferation treaty, which Canada is signatory to. One of those obligations is to participate in negotiations for a ban treaty. Indeed it is great that the Liberal government is participating in an array of activities, and we commend them for that. However, the Liberals are not giving any credible argument for why they are refusing to participate in this action that they claim to support: multilateral treaty negotiation at the UN.

I wonder if the member could speak to why they absolutely refuse to speak to the essence of our motion today. That is, not only their failure to participate, but to boycott negotiations among the majority of nations in the world, which were endorsed by over 100 recipients of the Order of Canada and almost every one of the former diplomats who have been appointed to speak on disarmament for our country.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, as our Right Hon. Prime Minister said the other day in question period, all Canadians strongly support concrete actions toward nuclear disarmament. We believe that the step-by-step approach where we are engaging with those states with nuclear arms is the best way forward for us to move toward a world that is free of nuclear arms. We are taking action. We are taking leadership. We are putting the proper amount of financing behind each of our actions. We feel that this is the best approach in order to move forward as expeditiously as possible. We are taking meaningful steps to achieve nuclear action. As we mentioned, we are doing the hard work of leading and rallying 159 different states to support and pass a resolution calling for the fissile material cut-off treaty. We led that late last year.

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for highlighting the importance of engaging our nuclear and non-nuclear partners toward nuclear disarmament. Can the member please elaborate to this House what consequences can take place if we do not engage our partners and allies in this discussion towards nuclear disarmament?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that, as soon as I heard it was coming up for debate in this venerable House, I wanted to make sure I was a part of it. I personally am very passionate about nuclear disarmament. I feel very proud when I read about the former UN Secretary-General's five-point plan and about Canadian leadership in each of the areas of the plan. That is not only our leadership, but steps we have taken, both in terms of our departments and of moving the game plan forward. It is important to make sure that we are engaging states who have nuclear arms to be a part of the conversation. We want to make sure that there is transparency, accountability, and proper funding. I know we are moving as quickly as possible. It is a thoughtful plan, a great plan, and I am very proud of our government for the leadership we are taking on this.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to nuclear non-proliferation and the comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty.

Since the advent of nuclear weapons, the international community has had various practical, multilateral instruments to try to stop their proliferation and help to eventually eliminate them. Global non-proliferation and disarmament regimes were designed to be the foundation for the careful management of nuclear weapons in the interests of international security.

The cornerstone of these regimes is the nuclear non-proliferation treaty or NPT. This treaty plays a fundamental role in guiding international mobilization on the most dangerous weapons in the world. The NPT outlines a three-part bargain: the nuclear weapon states commit to work toward nuclear disarmament; non-nuclear weapon states undertake not to acquire or try to acquire such weapons; and all state parties can continue to enjoy the benefits of peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Canada maintains that these three key commitments are mutually reinforcing. The progress that has been made in nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and peaceful uses of energy support the NPT overall and help to create a dynamic in which the treaty's laudable goals can be achieved.

Canada continues to support concrete, practical efforts in favour of nuclear disarmament. As set out in article VI of the NPT, nuclear weapon states should continue to take concrete measures to reduce the number of strategic and non-strategic weapons and to reduce their reliance on them in their security doctrines.

We note that progress has been made in that regard in recent history. At the end of the Cold War, significant steps were taken to reduce the world's nuclear arsenal, particularly in the United States and Russia. The United Kingdom and France took additional unilateral reduction measures. The global number of nuclear weapons dropped from 80,000 at the height of the Cold War to about 16,000 today. This is not insignificant. We will continue to further reduce the number of nuclear weapons through bilateral, plurilateral, or multilateral measures. Canada remains engaged in various international forums to encourage and support additional progress in that regard, particularly through the NPT review cycle.

While we remain firmly committed to working towards building a world free of nuclear weapons, we recognize that disarmament cannot happen in a vacuum and that it must take the strategic context into account as well as the practical issues associated with that commitment.

It is crucial to ensure that states with nuclear weapons participate in international processes to reduce the number of nuclear weapons or eliminate them entirely. We must also maintain the mutual trust among the parties involved as they move in the direction of reducing and eventually eliminating weapons stockpiles, a process that includes nuclear disarmament verification. Canada is steadfastly committed to the goal of nuclear disarmament.

Business of Supply

The second pillar of the NPT makes a vital contribution to the international safety framework by limiting the number of nuclear-weapon states and strengthening our ability to detect inappropriate activity on the part of non-nuclear-weapon states. Thanks to its impressive system of safeguards, the International Atomic Energy Agency, dubbed the “nuclear watchdog”, conducts a number of activities, such as on-site inspections, to ensure that states comply with their non-proliferation obligations. Canada applauds and actively supports the IAEA’s efforts to keep its safeguards up to date and enhance their efficiency and effectiveness.

Here is a practical example of international nuclear non-proliferation action: Canada also supports the joint comprehensive plan of action, the JCPOA, an international agreement signed by Iran and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—plus Germany in July 2015.

• (1315)

The JCPOA represents an important diplomatic achievement that helped in re-establishing the integrity of the global non-proliferation regime. As part of the JCPOA, Iran agreed to significantly curb its nuclear program and to comply with comprehensive international inspections. Canada continues to have serious doubts regarding Iran’s long-term nuclear ambitions given its history regarding nuclear proliferation and ballistic missile programs.

We join with our allies in supporting efforts to contain Iran’s nuclear program. Canada firmly supports the mandate given the International Atomic Energy Agency to conduct inspections. Furthermore, since 2015, Canada has made voluntary contributions totalling \$10 million through Global Affairs Canada’s weapons of mass destruction threat reduction program.

A complementary element to non-proliferation is the right of all states signatory to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty to use nuclear energy in a peaceful manner. States that fully comply with their non-proliferation obligations can legally have access to specific applications of nuclear energy so as to promote sustainable socio-economic development. These include activities pertaining to human health, agriculture and food safety, water and the environment, energy, radiation technology, and security and safety. Canada is a world leader in nuclear energy and we will continue to expand our network of nuclear partners for mutual and beneficial co-operation.

We have made major voluntary contributions as part of the International Atomic Energy Agency’s Peaceful Uses Initiative, which supports the agency’s activities to achieve sustainable development and mitigation of climate change objectives.

The NPT remains the cornerstone of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime as well as the central element at the basis of Canada’s global commitment on these important issues. Through our commitment to the relevant multilateral fora, we will continue to strengthen each of these three pillars.

Whereas the efforts made internationally to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons remain essential, we must work to eliminate nuclear tests forever through the signing of a legally binding treaty. Since being adopted in 1996, the comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty, or CTBT, has helped strengthen the de facto international

standard on nuclear testing. Among other things, this treaty has helped put in place a solid verification system that makes it possible to gather evidence of nuclear tests conducted anywhere in the world.

In fact, the international monitoring system has made it possible to detect each of the nuclear tests conducted to date by North Korea. The CTBT still needs to be ratified by eight countries to come into effect. Canada continues to play an active role in efforts to get other countries to ratify the treaty so that it can come into effect and be universally enforced. During a visit to New York in September 2016, the former minister of foreign affairs implored the eight countries in question to ratify the treaty so that it can come into force.

Regarding direct aid, Canada continues to promote concrete programs in support of the CTBT organization’s activities, including by providing airborne radiation detectors, on top of other financial contributions.

In February 2017, field testing in cold weather was carried out in Ottawa, Canada. This test also involved the use of the detector mentioned above. Canada is also working to construct, test and certify a radionuclide monitoring station as a contributing national facility to strengthen the capacity of the international monitoring system to verify compliance with the treaty.

Recognizing that nuclear weapons are a clear and real danger, the international community developed a set of practical measures that help to stop proliferation, limit nuclear testing and work toward the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons. Canada actively supports multilateral institutions established in support of achieving these goals.

• (1320)

We will continue to work with our foreign partners to achieve these laudable goals.

• (1325)

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a question to my colleague across the way. It is important to go back to our motion today to understand what it is we are discussing. We are discussing the fact that Canada has boycotted ongoing United Nations negotiations toward a nuclear ban treaty. It is important to keep in mind that, as the member is aware, as a party to the non-proliferation treaty, one of our binding obligations is to participate in those exact negotiations.

Business of Supply

We have not said anything against action on all the other obligations under that treaty, far from it. However, what is puzzling is the continued discussion about Canada bringing forward the motion on the fissile material. At the very meeting where Canada tabled yet another version of this measure with a new name, that was when it voted to oppose proceeding with the very negotiations that it is obligated to participate in under the non-proliferation treaty.

It is important to know that in fact there has not been progress on the fissile treaty, because the very same countries that they say make it purposeless to be at the negotiation with the UN are opposing the fissile ban. That includes Pakistan, China, Russia, Iran, Egypt, and Israel.

I would like to hear the member speak to the very purpose of the motion, which is a response to Canada's refusal to participate in its obligation to participate in these ongoing negotiations at the UN.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I would understand that if Canada were alone in its position, but Canada's position is the same as that of the United Kingdom, Germany and France, as well as Norway. Many of our multilateral partners have adopted the same position as Canada.

I believe we are taking the right multilateral approach with our G7 partners, and with Norway. I think that this is the correct approach in this file.

[English]

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for highlighting how our government is taking concrete action to achieve nuclear disarmament, such as rallying 159 states to support and pass a resolution calling for a fissile material cut-off treaty, ensuring a high-level group to help phase out nuclear weapons.

Would the member not agree that an immediate ban is an empty process that excludes essential players and may actually set back nuclear disarmament?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, I have to say I agree with my colleague. What is the point of negotiating nuclear disarmament if the players are not at the table?

We are working with our allies on this and working with communities in the multilateral countries that actually have nuclear weapons so that we can create concrete action on these issues. I thank her for her important question. It highlights what Canada is all about. We are not about just talking at a table without the players. We want to make sure that when we propose concrete actions to disarm nuclear weapons, those who own them are actually at the table.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

Obviously, this is a fascinating subject for everyone, and no one is against virtue, that goes without saying. However, last week, the minister announced that Canada would sit on eight additional committees. I would like to know if the same logic, to follow our

allies, applies here and why Canada cannot be the leader that it has already been in this area?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, Canada will always be a leader in the world. This has been the case for climate change. The Minister of Environment has done a good job working alongside with other partner countries around the world, to sign the Paris agreement. I am glad that all members of Parliament, except one, voted in favour of it.

Canada will always adopt a multilateral approach when it comes to international issues.

● (1330)

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Victoria.

I am pleased and proud to rise today to speak in favour of this motion calling on Canada to support the draft convention on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Some of the things I will say at the beginning of my remarks are well known.

There are more than 15,000 nuclear weapons in the world, and about 95% of those are owned by the United States and Russia, but there is good reason to believe that the U.K., China, France, India, Pakistan, North Korea, and Israel also possess nuclear weapons.

It is important to note the second thing that most people who are tuned into this topic are aware of, that nuclear weapons are the only weapons of mass destruction that are not explicitly prohibited by an international treaty. That is why I am both shocked and appalled, although that phrase may sound trite, by the attitude of the government on this question.

More than 120 countries are participating in the negotiations. Yesterday I sat here during question period and I heard the Prime Minister call the negotiations "sort of useless". His reason for calling these talks "sort of useless" was that the states that possessed nuclear weapons are not participating.

How will we make any progress on this issue if we do not apply pressure from the rest of the world on those countries that hold nuclear weapons? How will we get any of them to understand the necessity of renouncing not only the possible use but the possession of nuclear weapons?

There are really only two threats right now to the existence of humanity on this planet. One of those threats is global warming, and we have participated and the government claims leadership. Canada has participated in all of the international conventions to attack this main threat to humanity's existence.

We have not said that we will no longer participate in the Paris agreement because some leader of a country close to us does not believe that we should participate. That would be the same logic the Prime Minister used for not participating in the draft convention talks for the prohibition of nuclear weapons. It makes no sense to me. It is also a cavalier attitude that treats this issue as trivial. I would submit that this is anything but trivial, because it is the second threat to the existence of humanity on this planet.

Business of Supply

Thinking back to Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the use of nuclear weapons at that time, these were very small weapons in comparison to what exists today. We found out later that they were the only nuclear weapons in existence at that time. There were no great stockpiles and, if they had not worked, there were not lots more to use.

Today, 15,000 nuclear weapons exist and there is no guarantee, with the proliferation that has already taken place, with the number of countries that already have access to this technology, that we are going to be able to control this. There is no guarantee that we will be able to stop these weapons from falling into the hands of groups at a sub-state level, groups that we might want to label as terrorist groups. Who knows who might get access to these weapons because of the broad distribution of the technology at this point?

It is incumbent on us to take every action we can to make sure that nuclear weapons are destroyed and no longer available for use by anyone on this planet. It is like firefighting. We train firefighters. We get them to work as hard as they can on fire prevention as well as putting out fires. Firefighters do not just go to fires and turn on the hose. They work every day to try to educate the public and to identify threats. In this case, it would be far too late if we waited until nuclear weapons were used to then say it was tragedy and we should have done something.

This is like fire prevention. This is like disease prevention. I cannot understand not just the Prime Minister but other members on the other side whom I've heard saying just recently that this is a waste of time. One of the things we are short of is time. We are short of time on climate change. We are short of time in banning nuclear weapons. We need to make the best use of whatever efforts we can to make sure these weapons are destroyed.

New Democrats have long held this position. It is not something new for us. Canada previously held this position, and Canada previously has been a leader in trying to work against the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Canada is part of the international treaties to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

• (1335)

It makes no sense to me that the government is not participating in these talks, and not just participating, but we should be leading the talks. We should be applying the pressure on those of our allies who have nuclear weapons, and we should be offering whatever support they need to make that decision. Is there some way, through this convention, that we can offer greater security to those who feel so threatened that they feel they need nuclear weapons? Let us have Canada stand up diplomatically and try to solve those problems, to provide the leadership on those problems so that countries no longer feel so threatened that they have to possess these weapons of mass destruction. Again, it is not just participating; it is being a leader. It is putting forward the ideas through this treaty and through surrounding actions that will get us to a place where we no longer face this threat.

Yesterday, I had the privilege of standing with Hiroshima survivor Setsuko Thurlow, a Canadian citizen who, as a child growing up in Japan, was severely injured and lost many family members and friends as a result of that nuclear explosion. I am very proud of her and the campaign that she carries on. She received a standing

ovation at the United Nations. I would challenge the Prime Minister to tell Setsuko Thurlow that her campaign is useless. I would challenge him to do that.

However, the government would not even meet with her. Liberals would not even show up when she was here to hear what she had to say. With her was Cesar Jaramillo, the executive director of Project Ploughshares, which has worked tirelessly against all kinds of weapons, but in particular against nuclear weapons. I challenge the Prime Minister to tell Cesar Jaramillo that the work he does for Project Ploughshares is useless work. It is beyond belief that we have a prime minister who was so cavalier about this issue in question period yesterday. It is beyond belief after the speech that the Minister of Foreign Affairs gave in the House saying that, given the instability of the world, it was incumbent on Canada to step up and take a leadership role and that, because the United States is withdrawing from its responsibilities, it is going to be a more dangerous world. A day after that the Prime Minister stood and said here is something we are not going to lead on; we are not going to lead on trying to get rid of nuclear weapons.

A day after that we had the new defence strategy released. I am a somewhat naive member of Parliament sometimes. Having heard the Minister of Foreign Affairs say we are going to step up to take a leadership role, I actually expected to see that in our defence strategy. Instead, the defence strategy has not one new dollar for the Canadian military in this fiscal year, but promises for increased funding that are 10 and 20 years down the road.

The crises we face of international insecurity are now, not 10 years or 20 years down the road. Do not get me wrong. I have no complaint about a government that is going to plan for our future needs and equipment and that is going to cost those out properly. The problem I have is the gap between those promises and the reality we face every day in the Canadian military. We are about to take on a NATO mission in Latvia, which I and my party fully support. It is important to send a message to both Putin and Trump that the Baltics are NATO members and an attack on one is an attack on all. That is a very important mission for us.

We have also promised to take on a peacekeeping mission in Africa, another mission that I very much look forward to hearing about even though we are about six months late. How is the Canadian military going to take a leadership role in both those missions when its budget increase this year was less than the rate of inflation? We are asking it to take on new duties, which I am very proud of, with fewer resources than it had last year.

Business of Supply

I am a bit confused about the government's real attitude to international affairs. What does it expect Canada to accomplish if we are going to leave the obvious avenues for leadership vacant? I call on all members of the House to think very seriously about the implications of Canada continuing to be absent from these negotiations that would lead to a treaty that would make nuclear weapons illegal and that would lead to a much safer and secure world. Yes, the task is hard, but Canada did not shrink from this when it came to the Ottawa treaty to ban landmines. We did not shrink from this when we advocated for the International Criminal Court. Why are we shrinking from that responsibility to lead at this point? I have no answer to that question, and I would like the government to explain to me why it is not taking that leadership role.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the analogy that the member used about a fire. Our government is trying to reduce the matches, accelerant, and lighters, so people will not be able to sell them. That is what is going to stop the fire, not talking to others who do not have matches while not engaging with people who have the capability of starting a fire. We want to prevent it. This is why we have led the world on the fissile material cut-off treaty. We led 159 countries. We are taking leadership and making sure that the very materials that can cause the explosives in nuclear weapons will not be used and there is no proliferation. What we are trying to do is realistic and will reduce nuclear weapons. Simply talking to those without nuclear weapons and saying there will be a ban is not going to get rid of one single nuclear weapon.

Would the hon. member please comment on the fact that what we are trying to do will have impact?

• (1340)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to give a flippant response—although it is very tempting to say “How's that going, eh?” when it comes to the fissile treaty—because I believe that is a good thing for us to be doing. I would love to see progress on that treaty, but is the member honestly saying that we can only do one treaty at a time and we have no resources to pursue anything else while we are making very little progress on that treaty?

Using a view of history, I would dispute that it is useless, as the government continues to say, to hold talks to ban weapons when the nuclear powers are not there. We will absolutely be able to do this if we bring the pressure of the entire world to bear on those seven countries and, as I said, if we provide additional leadership in trying to cool off the conflicts that make those countries so fearful that they have to possess nuclear weapons. It is not a question of doing one or the other or saying that, because we are doing one thing, we cannot do any of the rest.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly enjoy working with my colleague on human rights issues. There are cases when we agree, but I do not think this is one of them, unfortunately. In principle, Conservatives would reject the idea of unilateral disarmament. We certainly favour the idea of seeking disarmament on a multilateral basis, but when certain nations that are more likely to respect international law unilaterally disarm, that potentially puts them at risk relative to other nations.

I will read a quote from Margaret Thatcher and ask him to reflect on it. I am sure he is a big fan, by the way, as she was a strong female prime minister. She said:

A world without nuclear weapons may be a dream but you cannot base a sure defence on dreams. Without far greater trust and confidence between East and West than exists at present, a world without nuclear weapons would be less stable and more dangerous for all of us.

She said this in 1987. Is she not right that we create greater risks for ourselves through unilateral disarmament if we then give a strategic and military advantage to countries that do not share our values and do not have any regard for international law?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I enjoy working with the hon. member, but he should know me well enough not to cite Margaret Thatcher to a gay man or expect me to agree with her on almost anything. I will say that she was absolutely wrong on most things, and I would include her quote on this as one of the things on which she was wrong.

When the member asks what the point is, he is sounding an awful lot like the Liberals, and it is one of the things I am getting used to in the chamber, these two parties sounding very much alike, even though one claims to have brought change. In response to his question, that is not the way diplomacy works. I would say that, even if I am naive and even if New Democrats are well meaning in their attitude to other countries, if the result of the negotiations was that one country gave up nuclear weapons, we would be one step closer to a safer world.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is always such a pleasure to follow my colleague from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke. His eloquent speech is inspirational to me.

I would like to read another inspirational quote, from the high representative for disarmament for the United States. She said, on June 2, “Disarmament breeds security. It is not a vague hope or aspiration but must be a concrete contribution to a safer and more secure world.” She concluded that this ban treaty is a “core component” of mechanisms under the United Nations for “our collective security.”

She is so right, and that is why it is so deeply disappointing for me as a Canadian to stand in this place and observe the Liberals walking away from the leadership role that this country has played in the past.

Here is an anecdote. When I was a much younger high-school student, a gentleman came to my high school. It was probably the proudest moment of my life to that point. That gentleman was Lester B. Pearson. I was head of the student council, and he came and talked about peacekeeping. He won the Nobel Prize for peacekeeping. How proud I was that day of a Liberal prime minister leading the world to create a safer place for children in that audience and for our children today.

Business of Supply

I think of Mr. Axworthy and the Ottawa treaty. He is another Liberal who stepped up and showed leadership when it was claimed it would make no difference, just another silly United Nations paper exercise. Now the Liberals brag about that, and justifiably.

Here we are today, talking about why Canada should walk away from over 100 other countries in the United Nations who are trying to create a safer world for the next generation. Here we have the top five—I could not find 10—list of why the Liberals think this is a joke and should not be proceeded with.

I want to go there, but first I want to tell members about what happened yesterday in a very emotional meeting that was organized where Ms. Setsuko Thurlow, a survivor of Hiroshima, came to speak to parliamentarians. I must say I was moved by what she had to say. She was a young girl when they dropped that bomb in Hiroshima and watched her nephew melt away before her very eyes in 4,000-degree heat. Canada is her adopted country. She is a social worker now in Toronto.

What was the most concerning to me as a Canadian is that she said she has been “betrayed” by her adopted country, Canada, for failing to be part of this historic United Nations meeting that’s considering the legal ban on nuclear weapons. Ms. Thurlow reminded me—and I confess I did not know this, but I looked it up and she is absolutely right—that the bomb that was dropped on her family and her neighbours in Hiroshima was fuelled by uranium from Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories and refined in Port Hope, Ontario, so Canada has been part of this story, sadly, from the get-go.

Nothing in the mandate letters of the former minister of foreign affairs or the current minister even talks about nuclear disarmament, even though we know we are leading the way with weapons of mass destruction. Be they biological or chemical weapons or the landmines treaty, Canada is right there. However, when it comes to nuclear weapons, what happened to Canada? What happened to that leadership I talked about before?

My colleague from Laurier—Sainte-Marie, the critic for the NDP on foreign affairs, stood in this place, how many times, to ask about the government’s participation in the UN talks that are soon to be under way? She stood seven times and seven times got a non-answer, which is no answer whatsoever.

Therefore, it might be helpful if I could, in the interest of time, go to the top five Liberal reasons for doing nothing.

Number one is the fissile material cut-off treaty, and it is an important thing. What did someone just say? If we do not have the matches, we are going to prevent the fire, so that is a good thing. Yes, it is sort of like saying that gun control efforts should be abandoned because they undermine progress on bullet control. I suppose that is the logic that the Liberals use.

•(1345)

I am entirely in favour of the fissile material cut-off treaty. Who would not be? Good for Canada for stepping up, in that context, and trying to prohibit the further production of weapons-grade uranium and plutonium. That has to be a good step. However, that does not mean we cannot do other things with the over 120 countries on this planet that want to make progress on this. If we are talking about a straw man argument, that would be one: hiding behind the fig leaf of

justifiable work on the fissile material cut-off treaty. That is argument number one.

Argument number two is that our position must be consistent with our NATO allies. Members heard it here first today. Multilateralism only seems to be what our NATO allies want and what Mr. Trump wants. I thought Canada wanted to be leading the world at the UN Security Council. Maybe I missed that, but it seems shocking—

•(1350)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to remind hon. members that debate is going on. It is nice to hear everyone getting along, but it makes it very difficult to hear the compelling argument that the hon. member for Victoria is making.

The hon. member for Victoria.

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that.

The second argument that I guess the Liberals are putting up is that our position has to be consistent with our NATO allies.

What about The Netherlands? That is one of our NATO allies. It is going to the conference. It is not cowed by Mr. Trump. It is not getting a phone call, saying, “Please don’t do what other NATO allies are doing.” It is not afraid to show the leadership that Mr. Pearson and Mr. Axworthy showed. It is stepping up. Good for The Netherlands for showing that courage, because standing up for peace usually does require some element of courage.

Argument number three is that there is no point going ahead without all nuclear weapon states on board. That is my favourite.

The minister has suggested there is no point in negotiations unless we have all nuclear weapon states on board. That is ridiculous. Past international agreements, from landmines to conflict diamonds, to the International Criminal Court, were challenged as complex and not necessary, but again, there was leadership and others came along. As Canadians on the world stage, we were proud of the work that our representatives did in those contexts. Not this time, though, now we are embarrassed.

Argument number four of the top five is that there is no point, given the global security environment. Therefore, the only time we step up for peace is when we are singing *Kumbaya* all together. How silly is this argument? We know the world is challenged. There is Crimea, North Korea, Syria. It is as if somehow that is an excuse, given the current security environment, to not take a more bold approach to nuclear disarmament. That is never going to be the case. We are never going to make progress if we can say that.

The fifth and last argument is that a ban would be ineffective anyway.

Statements by Members

How do we know? The landmines one was not. The landmines treaty was effective. We managed to make progress on a number of environmental fronts, from the Montreal ozone-depleting convention, to other areas. Nobody thought that would work, and it worked. That lack of courage, lack of boldness by our government, again, in the context of such great leaders in the past who I mentioned before, both of whom were Liberal, is shocking.

We could make progress. If it is true that nuclear weapons conventions would be ineffective, which is what people are saying, then why are weapon states opposed to them? There is a contradiction here. If it is ineffective, then why are they opposed? Why do they not say it is another paper UN exercise? Is there a logic gap? I certainly think there is.

In conclusion, John F. Kennedy, one of my heroes, said the following of similar challenges in a very different time, "Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate."

That is what our motion today calls on Canada to do: to return to the table, to participate in good faith, as, by the way, article VI of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, which we signed, requires us to do. Let us do what we said we would do. Let us stand up on the world stage again. Let us not be cowed by what a president says or what seems to be correct at the moment. Let us show the leadership Canada used to be famous for.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand here as a proud Liberal, in the traditions of Lester Pearson and Pierre Trudeau, and their efforts and their successes, in one obvious case, the success of winning a Nobel Peace Prize on the international front. Therefore, I do not think we will take any lessons from any party in this chamber with respect to multilateralism and peacemaking around the world.

What separates us from the New Democrats here today is their tendency to think that if we do not do things exactly as they propose, then we are not doing anything. We know that Canada is leading 159 countries in bringing forward a UN resolution with respect to the fissile material cut-off treaty. We are also spending well-nigh \$73 million a year toward reducing the threat of weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, I would ask my hon. friend this. Do we always have to do it the NDP way in order for its members to congratulate us?

• (1355)

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I was so pleased to hear the reference to Mr. Pearson, and then to Mr. Pierre Elliott Trudeau, the gentleman who went to Washington and Moscow to seek a halt to nuclear weapons. This is not the NDP way; this is the old Liberal way.

Second, to suggest that this is somehow about the NDP, when there are 120 countries in the world that are begging us to come and show leadership at the end of June in the United Nations, seems a little flip.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for my colleague. Does he think it would be considered progress if we lived in a world where the United States, Great Britain, or France no longer had nuclear weapons but Russia, China, and North Korea continued to have

nuclear weapons? Would he regard that as an improvement to the situation we have right now?

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, the answer is no.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the interesting response my colleague gave to the question from the Liberal side, which seems to be suggesting that this is somehow an NDP tactic. I appreciated his references to the elder Trudeau's policies and to the 130 countries that are asking Canada to contribute to this effort.

I wonder if my colleague did not also find it strange that following the 2011 Liberal Party convention, that party supported a resolution that said exactly what we are now proposing.

Does my colleague not think that they are betraying their own supporters, in a way, by refusing to support a motion that says the same thing as something approved at the last Liberal convention?

[*English*]

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Laurier—Sainte-Marie, who has consistently shown such enormous leadership on this file.

It is one of those things that, if I were a Liberal militant, I would find somewhat sad. Liberals go to a convention and express themselves, in such numbers, in favour of this apparently NDP initiative, only to find out that when they come back to Ottawa their members of Parliament stand up and take the exact opposite position. Actually, as I have seen that before, maybe it is not such a surprise.

However, I am not making light of this, and I do not intend to leave it on a light note. We are talking about weapons of mass destruction. We are talking about one of the two challenges facing humanity today: global climate change and disarmament requirements to restrict the expansion of the already enormous stockpile of nuclear weapons around the world. Why can Canada not be part of this, rather than watching from the sidelines and hiding behind the U.S. president, because that is what is going on?

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in early 2015, the Canada Border Services Agency carried out a \$16-million project to modernize the Morses Line border crossing in Saint-Armand in my riding.

The project was completed in late April 2015, and ever since then, one of my constituents, Nelly Auger, has been living out a real nightmare. That crossing was automated, which meant the construction of a new building that skirts her property, as well as the installation of LED lights that shine into her bedroom. No one would deny this is an invasion of her privacy.

Statements by Members

In an email exchange between the CBSA and Nelly Auger, they agreed that a fence needed to be installed. The email is dated July 2015. This is 2017, and the matter is still not resolved. The cost of the fence is \$2,611, although it was a \$16-million project.

I want to know why this has not been resolved. Nelly Auger is also asking to be compensated for her home's loss in value.

* * *

• (1400)

[English]

BREAKFAST ON THE FARM

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am especially looking forward to Breakfast on the Farm in the North Okanagan—Shuswap this weekend. Agricultural producers from the area will be hosting Breakfast on the Farm. Now in its third year, this annual event is open to the public and free of charge, drawing over 1,000 people annually.

On Friday, the Serene Lea Farms, home of the Stobbe family in Mara, will host over 300 students from schools in the region. On Saturday, there is a free pancake breakfast for everyone, and a tour of a dairy and blueberry farm to experience how our food is produced. Local agricultural equipment providers will also be showcasing the latest equipment for working in the fields and in the barns.

If people enjoy breakfast each day, then thank a farmer. If people happen to be in the North Okanagan—Shuswap this Saturday, they can thank them in person at Breakfast on the Farm.

* * *

[Translation]

SUMMER CELEBRATIONS IN GATINEAU

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, entertainment will abound this summer in Gatineau for Canada 150.

Starting June 30, Jacques Cartier Park will be presenting the spectacular achievements of MosaiCanada, true masterpieces depicting our country's 150 years of history and culture.

From July 7 to 9, Lac Beauchamp Park will host the Wonders of Sand, a festival of epic proportions for the entire family.

Then, the Cirque du Soleil will set up its big top in Gatineau, where it will hold its show *Volta*, which is sure to amaze young and old alike all through the month of August.

From August 31 to September 4, La Baie Park will once again be the site of Gatineau's colourful Hot Air Balloon Festival.

Of course, our city's spirit and vitality will shine through in the block parties that will light up our various neighbourhoods all summer long.

I invite all of my colleagues on both sides of the House to enjoy the summer months in Gatineau.

[English]

WORLD OCEANS DAY

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is World Oceans Day, an international day to celebrate our oceans and encourage conservation by addressing climate change, pollution, microplastics, overfishing, and habitat destruction.

As we celebrate Canada's 150th birthday, we can take pride knowing it was Canadians who first proposed World Oceans Day at Rio's earth summit in 1992. However, Canada must do more to protect our oceans by lowering emissions, adding marine protected areas, encouraging sustainable fisheries, transitioning salmon aquaculture to safe closed containment, protecting killer whale habitat and other marine ecosystems, and removing abandoned vessels from our waters.

I encourage all members of the House to support World Oceans Day. We must come together today to protect our oceans for tomorrow.

I would like to acknowledge that today is our first World Oceans Day without one of its greatest champions, Rob Stewart. We miss him, but he will not be forgotten.

* * *

TALL SHIPS IN HASTINGS—LENNOX AND ADDINGTON

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, grab your tricorne hat. I have spotted a great event on the horizon in Hastings—Lennox and Addington. Eleven tall ships from around the world are dropping anchor in Bath this July 7th to 9th at the historic Fairfield-Gutzeit House.

This hearty celebration of Canada's 150th birthday is sure to bring thousands of visitors for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get an up close and personal view. There will be live music and kids' activities, and spectators will have a chance to tour the tall ships. There will even be historic naval demonstrations, including a naval battle out on the water on Saturday evening.

I am also very proud to say that Ben Bell, a sea cadet on my youth council, will also be taking part in the entire tall ship journey this summer.

I invite my honourable colleagues on the port side and the starboard side to go full steam ahead. All aboard for the tall ships in Bath.

* * *

DOMINION OF CANADA

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 150 years ago, our forefathers wrestled with the question, "How will we describe this vast new Canada of ours?"

The term "Kingdom of Canada" was suggested, but that did not quite fit. Then, during one of his daily Bible readings, Sir Samuel Tilley, one of the Fathers of Confederation, was struck by Psalm 72:8: "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea."

Statements by Members

God's hand has indeed been over the Dominion of Canada ever since. On July 1, we will celebrate Canada's 150th birthday. As we look back over the years, we are reminded that together we have come through times of war, times of peace, times of hardship, and times of prosperity.

Through it all, what has made Canada truly great are the values that the Fathers of Confederation exemplified: hard work, self-sacrifice, and integrity. This strong foundation has made Canada a land of stability and opportunity for all Canadians. This Canada Day, let us resolve to make Canada an even greater place for all of us who call it home.

* * *

● (1405)

PORTUGUESE DAY IN CAMBRIDGE

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the Portuguese Day festivities in Cambridge.

They started last weekend with the Portuguese Holy Spirit Festival, and many came out to support the over 10,000 Portuguese community members in my riding. The festivities continue this weekend with the Portuguese parade and flag raising. Portuguese traditions, including their dancing, food, music, and art, are woven deeply into the cultural fabric of Cambridge. I encourage everyone to come out this weekend and enjoy the best that Portugal and Cambridge have to offer.

This year we also take a moment to remember and honour long-time organizer Marina Cunha, who was taken far too soon this past year. I want to thank all the organizers and the entire Portuguese community for hosting this amazing festival.

Obrigado.

* * *

IMMIGRATION IN ATLANTIC CANADA

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 2, 2016, I was proud to see every member of this House united and voting in favour of my Motion No. 39 to study the issue of immigration in Atlantic Canada. There was a mutual recognition of Atlantic Canada's important contribution to our country.

Sadly, it seems that the opposition's goodwill towards Atlantic Canada has since disappeared. Let me be clear: Atlantic Canadians are hard-working, unassuming people. Our region has known tough economic times, but we are working hard to find solutions. Immigration is definitely part of the solution, and the committee's study will be one more tool to help our region grow economically.

I am saddened to see members of the opposition filibuster this important study and show such disrespect for Atlantic Canada. The fact that the Conservatives and NDP are playing political games with the economic well-being of Atlantic Canada is nothing short of shameful.

I ask my colleagues opposite to end the political games, and let us all work together to support Atlantic Canada.

ALBERTA GREAT KIDS AWARD WINNER

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Yellowhead, grade 9 student Taija Dryden, from H.W. Pickup School, was selected along with 15 other children for the 2017 Alberta Great Kids Award, which is given to children and youth who connect to their communities and play useful roles within them.

Taija has juvenile dermatomyositis, a disease with no cure that causes a rash, fatigue, extreme pain, and weakness. Taija served as a mentor for her friends, family, and community, and volunteered within her school.

She has spent many days and months in and out of hospitals, but instead of complaining, she uses her time there to help other kids who are sick. Taija is a true example of strength, hope, and determination.

Congratulations, Taija, on being selected.

* * *

● (1410)

WORLD OCEANS DAY

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, World Oceans Day celebrates the fact that Canada is an ocean-rich country. We have the world's longest coastline, and our oceans generate the oxygen we breathe, provide food, and regulate our climate.

This morning, our Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard announced the new St. Anns Bank marine protected area, east of Cape Breton, protecting over 100 species. It is an important habitat for several commercial fish stocks.

Earlier this year, our government designated the 9,000-year-old glass sponge reefs in B.C.'s Hecate Strait as a marine protected area, and we have identified a new 140,000-square-kilometre area of interest in the offshore Pacific bioregion, the biggest to date. We are on target to protect 5% of Canada's oceans by year's end.

As well, there is a new \$75-million coastal restoration fund to restore and rebuild important habitat for the fish stocks that are so important to our coastal communities. It all adds up to a great toast to the health of Canada's oceans on this important day.

* * *

TERRORIST ATTACK IN TEHRAN

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone in this House was shocked and saddened to hear of the brutal terrorist attack in Tehran yesterday. The 12 dead and dozens injured were peace-loving mothers, wives, and sisters and innocent fathers, brothers, and sons. Today we remember them, as we do all victims of senseless hatred.

I would like to thank our Minister of Foreign Affairs for her categorical condemnation of this latest atrocity.

Statements by Members

The attack in Tehran follows on the recent heels of similarly barbaric and heart-wrenching attacks in London, Kabul, and Baghdad. Canada will always stand with the innocent victims of terrorist attacks whenever and wherever this evil scourge rears its ugly head.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SUMMER PARTY

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I invite the constituents of Beauport—Limoilou to my second annual summer party on July 8, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., in the magnificent Domaine de Maizerets park.

There will be treats for people young and old, like hotdogs, corn on the cob, chips and other goodies, that will be served between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., compliments of our generous local sponsors.

In case of bad weather, there is the cabin at the Domaine de Maizerets, as well as a tent on location, so the party will go on rain or shine.

There will be events throughout the day, including music in a variety of styles and games for the young and young at heart. If there is one party everyone should attend this summer, it is this one.

I would add that last year the party drew close to 2,000 guests, so with the help of Mother Nature, we are expecting 3,000 this time around.

Thank you very much, and I hope to see a big turnout at the Beauport—Limoilou summer party.

* * *

[*English*]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as one of 92 women in this place, I want to highlight the work our government is doing to promote gender equality and especially women's empowerment. In each action we take, gender-based analysis is a key part of the plan.

I want to commend our feminist Prime Minister and our cabinet for the work they are doing on this topic.

The Minister of Finance published the first-ever gender statement in budget 2017. The Minister of Status of Women is working hard for women's empowerment. The Minister of National Defence included gender-based analysis in the new defence policy, and the Minister of Justice announced changes to our legal system to further protect women. The list goes on.

With the leadership of this government and national organizations like Equal Voice, we are on the right track toward gender equality. As a mother of two daughters, I am very proud of the difference we are making for the next generation of Canadian women.

[*Translation*]

NO. 1 SAINT-HYACINTHE CADET CORPS

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to pay tribute to the No. 1 Saint-Hyacinthe Cadet Corps, the first and oldest in Canada, which is celebrating its 185th anniversary.

This organization is very active and well-rooted in the past and the present. It represents nothing less than Canada's history. Many well-known individuals were cadets under this banner. The 20th and 21st premiers of Quebec, Daniel Johnson Sr. and Jean-Jacques Bertrand, were members of No. 1 Saint-Hyacinthe Cadet Corps.

This historic organization is the pride of my region. I thank all the volunteers who instill a sense of respect, discipline, and service in our young people. By focusing on leadership, physical fitness, and civics, this program helps young people become engaged and involved in their community. The motto of No. 1 Saint-Hyacinthe Cadet Corps is love, honour, and glory.

I thank No. 1 Saint-Hyacinthe Cadet Corps.

* * *

[*English*]

COMMUNITY LEADER

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize one of Red Deer—Mountain View's outstanding community leaders, a lifelong friend and neighbour, Gloria Beck.

Last week, Gloria was named Red Deer Citizen of the Year at the Rotary Club's annual gala.

As the owner of Parkland Nurseries & Garden Centre, Gloria has enriched our lives with not only the beauty of nature, but also as a shining example of how one cares for the less fortunate. She has touched the lives of so many of her fellow Albertans through her work with numerous local charities like Habitat for Humanity, the women's shelter, local food banks, and the Canadian Cancer Society. She has also been a great supporter of Red Deer College and has been an outstanding director on the Olds College board, as noted by outgoing Olds College president Tom Thompson.

Gloria was also the first female president of the downtown Rotary Club, as well as the first female president of the International Garden Centre Association.

On behalf of all Albertans, I salute Gloria Beck. She makes us all proud.

* * *

● (1415)

TERRORIST ATTACK IN TEHRAN

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada strongly condemns the recent terrorist attacks in Tehran, including those committed at the Iranian Parliament. We grieve the deaths and injuries sustained by many civilians and deplore the targeting of innocent Iranians. Our thoughts and sympathies at this time are with the people of Iran.

Oral Questions

The timing of these attacks, carried out during the holy month of Ramadan, is an offence to the spirit of this sacred period.

I join Iranian Canadians in my riding of Richmond Hill and all Canadians in condemning this attack. Canada remains unwavering in the global fight against terrorism and the hatred on which it is based.

[*Member spoke in Farsi*]

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, the Minister of Foreign Affairs gave a major speech on Canada's foreign policy, but she failed to mention Canada's foreign policy with respect to China. Now we know why.

The minister of industry was quietly approving a Chinese takeover deal of Vancouver-based Norsat International, a company that builds satellite receivers for NATO.

Why is the Prime Minister so eager to sell our military technology to Beijing?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take the protection of national security very seriously. We never have and never will compromise on national security.

All investments reviewed under the Investment Canada Act are screened by Canada's national security agencies. The national security community conducted a rigorous review and confirmed that security procedures and safeguards were in place that were in keeping with our high standards. We always have and always will protect our national security.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gets worse. Normally any deal involving this type of satellite technology would be subject to a formal, national security review. However, in a very troubling development, the industry minister decided that a national security review was not necessary for this Chinese takeover.

Canadian national security interests are at stake here. Why did the Prime Minister allow this sale to China to go ahead without the comprehensive security review that it needed?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the process was followed under the Investment Canada Act. As I stated before, we never have and never will compromise our national security.

When it comes to our economic agenda and our overall Investment Canada Act regime, we are being very clear that in order to grow the economy and create jobs, we must be open to investments, open to trade, open to people. This is good for Canada and it is good for our economy. We will always defend the middle class and those working hard to join it.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is shocking. Hytera Communications has previously been accused of large-scale theft of intellectual property and the U.K.

raised major red flags when Hytera tried to acquire a similar British company. Richard Fadden, the former head of CSIS, said that he would have recommended a full-fledged national security review of this deal.

Why is the Prime Minister allowing his fascination with China and his overwhelming desire to appease it to cloud his judgment on the national security of our country?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the Investment Canada Act, all transactions are subject to a national security review. Therefore, we followed the process. It was a rigorous process.

We have been very clear that when it comes to the economy, when it comes to growth and jobs, we are open to investment, trade, and people. We always have and always will ensure that we never, ever compromise our national security.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think that the government does not realize what an enormous mistake it just made.

We learned about something quite serious in this morning's *Globe and Mail*. Norsat in Vancouver, a manufacturer of high tech components for NATO satellites, has just been sold to Chinese interests, and unfortunately the national security protocol was not followed properly or carefully.

Is this the Prime Minister's way of thanking his Chinese friends who paid top dollar to meet with him privately a year ago?

● (1420)

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I disagree with my friend and colleague.

[*English*]

We have been very clear that the process was followed under the Investment Canada Act. We have always followed the law. We have made sure that we listen to our national security agencies and the experts and the advice they give us. Based on that advice and the feedback, we make decisions accordingly. We never have and never will compromise on national security.

We have also been very clear that we are open to investment to ensure we grow our economy and create good quality jobs for the middle class.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Norsat does not make shoes. It makes high-tech components that it sells to the U. S. Department of Defense and other NATO countries. This very valuable, very sensitive information is now in the hands of Chinese investors. The worst part is that this deal was not even subject to a national security review.

Oral Questions

Why did the government drop the ball on this?

[*English*]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I want to take this opportunity to correct the record. The member opposite is saying that this transaction was not subject to a national security review. That is not the case.

All transactions under the Investment Canada Act are subject to a national security review. We have followed the process. We have done our due diligence. We have consulted the national security agencies. We will ensure that we never have and never will compromise our national security. At the same time, we are committed to growing our economy by ensuring we are open to investment, trade, and people.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is an important issue for all Canadians and for our security.

I know the minister, and I know him to be an honourable gentleman, so I want to give him a chance to correct something he has just said.

In his first answers, he was particularly prudent. In his first of five answers he talked about a screening. However, he knows, and we all know, that a screening is not a national security review. He then said, “procedures were followed”, which can mean anything and nothing. At the very end, the minister started saying that there was a national security review, which had a definition.

I would like him to clarify that. Was there or was there not a full national security—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development.

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the Investment Canada Act, all transactions are subject to a national security review and to ensure that the process has been followed. Under this transaction, and all transactions, we followed the law. We made sure we did our homework, and we did our due diligence.

Any feedback we receive from the national security agencies is taken seriously and taken into account before we make a decision. We always have and always will ensure that we never, ever compromise our national security.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I expect the minister would have no problem sharing the national security agencies' verdicts on this deal.

In March, the Prime Minister overturned a decision that Stephen Harper made and allowed China to take over the high-tech company we are talking about. Barely three months later, he is at it again. He is refusing to subject this takeover to a national security review even though Canada uses the company's technology for its own military purposes.

My question to the Liberals is this: Why are you selling our military secrets to China?

The Speaker: I would remind the member for Outremont to direct his comments to the Chair.

The hon. Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development.

[*English*]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the specific case raised by the member opposite, again, was with regard to O-Net. Let us be clear. We did not overturn a cabinet order. The previous government managed the process so poorly that it ended up in court. We made sure we did a rigorous process. We examined all the facts by our national security agencies and the law was followed.

We always have and we always will ensure that we never, ever compromise our national security.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I asked yesterday about the UN nuclear disarmament negotiations that included over 120 countries. The Prime Minister said, “There can be all sorts of people talking about nuclear disarmament, but if they do not actually have nuclear arms, it is sort of useless...”

The 1997 Ottawa treaty on land mines was initiated by Canada under a Liberal government and signed by over 100 countries that did not use land mines. Could the government now explain how that treaty was also “useless”?

● (1425)

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to nuclear disarmament, our goal has been very clear. We are taking great steps to achieve it. That means doing hard work to deliver something tangible.

As mentioned by the Prime Minister yesterday, in 2016, for the first time ever, Canada rallied 159 states to support a resolution calling for the fissile material cut-off treaty. This is a concrete step toward a phasing-out of nuclear weapons and, crucially, including both nuclear and non-nuclear countries. This is real action that matters to Canadians.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2016, in August in fact, the Liberals voted for the first time in our history against nuclear disarmament.

In the words of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, “Political leaders will decide whether or not a nuclear war actually takes place, yet politicians act as if peace is too complicated for them.”

[*Translation*]

Those words are all the more meaningful as the Liberals and Conservatives attack the NDP's motion on nuclear disarmament.

Do the Liberals not understand that what the current Prime Minister is saying is a direct insult to over 120 countries?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr Speaker, let me be clear. We strongly support efforts toward nuclear disarmament. However, what the member opposite is proposing is a negotiation of a nuclear weapon ban treaty without the participation of states that possess nuclear weapons. This is posturing, not practical diplomacy that can make a real difference.

Our position is consistent with our allies, Germany and Norway just to name a few. We are driving real action by working with nuclear and non-nuclear countries to achieve our ultimate goal, which is nuclear disarmament.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has stated that the infrastructure bank will shield taxpayers from risk, but let us be clear: Taxpayers are funding the bank, taxpayers will be paying the profits to private investors through user fees and tolls, and the minister is guaranteeing loans using taxpayer dollars. All of this additional risk is on the backs of taxpayers.

Will the minister admit that the only people being shielded from risk are the private investors?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have often stated in the House, the bank is designed to shift the risk to the private sector, with appropriate investments that the private sector will make in any given project.

We will make sure that the experts who will be running the bank ensure that the public interest is always protected and that public dollars are always protected.

Our goal is to make sure we are building the infrastructure that our communities need to grow our economy and create jobs for the middle class.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, P3 Canada has been leveraging private sector dollars for infrastructure since 2009. Six billion dollars has been leveraged from an initial investment of \$1.3 billion. A \$35-billion investment into P3Canada would leverage \$170 billion, all without guaranteeing private sector loans with taxpayer dollars. An internal report from KPMG recommended using P3 Canada's existing structure for the bank.

Will the minister reverse this decision for the bank and invest in P3 Canada?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, P3s will continue to play a dominant role in building infrastructure, and we support that. We are allowing municipalities to make their own decisions. We do not impose a certain procurement model on our partners. It is their decision.

As well, the PPP Canada organization has supported the creation of the Canada infrastructure bank, because it sees that both complement each other to build the infrastructure that is required by Canadian communities.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what do the former parliamentary budget officer, the former president of the Business Development Bank, the Quebec National Assembly, KPMG's internal report, and all members on this side of the House have in common? They have all spoken out against the infrastructure bank.

Will the Prime Minister and the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities finally make the right decision and remove the infrastructure bank from Bill C-44?

● (1430)

[English]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, very reputable Canadian pension funds, such as the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, teachers, OMERS, Caisse de dépôt, the Alberta Investment Management Corporation, invest in international infrastructure. They invest in infrastructure in other countries.

We want to create conditions so that our own pension funds that manage money on behalf of Canadians can invest in our own country to build the needed infrastructure and create jobs for Canadians. What is wrong with that?

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is really unfortunate to see how stubborn the government and the minister are being about this. Even though everyone is warning them not to do it, they are headed for disaster. Who is going to pay for this? Who is going to contribute the \$35 billion? It is going to come directly out of taxpayers' pockets.

Will the Prime Minister finally listen to the parliamentarians on this side of the House or will the Senate once again have to give the government a reality check?

[English]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the process to create the Canada infrastructure bank, we consulted extensively with municipalities, provinces, stakeholders, and investors.

We all understand that in order to mobilize private capital, in order to build the infrastructure, we need to create a governance structure, an arm's-length crown corporation, accountable to the government through Parliament to the people of Canada. We want to undertake projects that will serve the public interest and the public good.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member says that the infrastructure bank will be arm's length, but that arm will be long enough to reach into the pockets of taxpayers. In fact, it will be long enough to reach into their pockets for projects that are already financed by the private sector. Former Liberal minister, Sergio Marchi, now lobbying for power companies, wants loan guarantees from taxpayers to build projects that are already built by the private sector.

Will the government admit that this is not about increasing private involvement, but rather putting private profit on the backs of public risk?

Oral Questions

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have put forward a very ambitious, bold plan to build Canadian community infrastructure, tripling the investment compared to the previous government's meagre commitment to building infrastructure.

We understand that if we mobilize private capital, we can undertake projects that would never get built. That is the vision we have, and that is exactly what we want to do by mobilizing our pension funds to invest in our own country.

* * *

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year, an employee of Shared Services Canada received an access to information request for all documents containing the words "Liberal Party". The employee released 12 documents and deleted 398. It is an offence under section 67 of the Access to Information Act to destroy documents that have been requested under the act.

The matter has been referred to the Attorney General. I wonder if the Attorney General will recuse herself, given that it is a Liberal Party matter, and let the director of public prosecutions decide whether to prosecute the matter.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government expects our employees to meet the highest level of ethical behaviour and decision-making. Shared Services Canada took this situation very seriously, immediately launched an investigation of the situation, and notified the Information Commissioner. Of course, as is normal, the matter has been referred to the Attorney General of Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after the debacle with Madeleine Meilleur's appointment, I hope that the government understands that there cannot be any partisanship in the appointment of officers of Parliament.

The position of official languages commissioner is a vital one because the person who holds that position ensures respect for both official languages and the law. The commissioner works for Parliament, not for the Prime Minister.

Does the government commit today to follow the process established in the Official Languages Act and truly consult the opposition leaders?

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we promised Canadians a new, open, rigorous, and merit-based process, and that is what we gave them.

Madam Meilleur proved that she was qualified for the job at every step of the process. She dedicated a major part of her career to defending the interests of official languages communities. We hope that she will continue to play a leadership role on this important file. More information will be available in the next few days.

• (1435)

[English]

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after all the repetitious nonsense, can the Liberals now acknowledge that appointing a partisan commissioner, without real consultation, will result in unnecessary scandal and is a waste of Parliament's time?

After the embarrassing withdrawal of Madam Meilleur's nomination, will the Liberals work with us to make sure this never happens again? Will the Liberals do the right thing and commit today to a new process that ensures meaningful consultation before any officer of the House is nominated, yes or no?

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government promised Canadians a rigorous, open, and merit-based process for public appointments, and we are keeping that commitment. At no point in this process were Madame Meilleur's qualifications questioned. She has been a fierce advocate of the official languages communities. We hope that she continues her advocacy on this important file. More information will be available in the days to come.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how did that work out for them?

The Liberals tried to put a Liberal donor in a position that would have allowed them to not have any real oversight. The process was a train wreck, and responsibility for it lies directly with the Prime Minister, Gerald Butts, Katie Telford, and the heritage minister. We can bet that had this appointment occurred, the dominoes would have fallen quickly to fill the other vacant non-partisan positions with Liberal insiders.

Could the Prime Minister tell us if his backroom political operatives are making new deals to fill the vacant parliamentary officer positions?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have shared with all members, as well as Canadians, we have put into place a new, open, transparent, merit-based appointment process where we look at gender parity and Canada's two official languages. We are looking for highly qualified candidates. Any open positions are available online so that Canadians can apply. This is a new process that we have committed to Canadians. We will continue to deliver on our commitments.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the election, the Prime Minister promised that oversight watchdogs would be accountable only to Parliament, not the government of the day. Like many things the Prime Minister has promised, those promises are proving to be worthless.

Oral Questions

Playing political games with these appointments calls into question the legitimacy of Liberal motives. For example, the Ethics Commissioner's term is up in 30 days and there is no word on her replacement. That makes one wonder whether the Prime Minister wants the investigation into his questionable ethics to go away with Mrs. Dawson's retirement. Can the Liberals give us a reason why they have not moved to fill this position?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will always appreciate the work that officers of Parliament do. That is why we have committed to always working with them. If there is any information required with respect to the cases, we will be more than willing to provide it. The Prime Minister has said that. I have said that.

When it comes to the appointment process, we have introduced a new, open, transparent, merit-based appointment process. I encourage all Canadians to apply for the open positions that are all posted online.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, given the problems with the process for appointing an official languages commissioner, Canadians have the right to know what criteria will be used to appoint future officers of Parliament. Will there be a non-partisan process, as Canadians have the right to expect, or will being a Liberal Party donor be the one and only criterion in the process for appointing the next Ethics Commissioner?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we put in place a new, open, transparent, and merit-based appointment process. Our aim is to identify high-quality candidates who will help to achieve gender parity and truly reflect Canada's diversity.

Canadians can continue to apply for positions, which are advertised online.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to give the Minister of Innovation one more chance on this one, because I am very troubled about how there were two answers being given in the House today.

Despite the fact that Norsat actually sells technology to Nav Canada, which is in charge of our air traffic, the minister said to *The Globe and Mail* that it was decided in the security screening analysis that an in-depth security review by CSIS and the Department of National Defence was not necessary. Will he tell us once and for all in this House if he is relying on a flimsy screening analysis? Why did he not allow for a full in-depth review?

•(1440)

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am relying on the same process that was followed by the previous government, and by that member. I will always follow the law. Under the Investment

Canada Act, the process is very clear. All transactions are subject to a national security review. We made sure that we followed the process. We did our due diligence. We did our homework. We heard very loud and clear the feedback given by national security agencies before we made any decision. We have never and we never will compromise our national security.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is World Oceans Day, a day to acknowledge our important relationship with our oceans. In B.C., understanding salmon is a direct link to understanding our oceans. However, just two weeks ago, the government announced that it will end the popular salmon in the classroom education program. Over one million students have gone through this powerful program since it began. For the sake of our oceans, and our salmon, will the minister reverse this terrible decision to cut the salmon in the classroom education program?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad, on World Oceans Day, to tell members of the House that I had the privilege earlier today of announcing the creation of Canada's newest marine protected area, St. Anns Bank, off the east coast of Cape Breton, in the province of Nova Scotia.

With respect to the question about salmonid enhancement, this is a very valuable program. It is a program for which I share the member's view. It has done a great deal to protect the iconic species of Pacific salmon. We will always be there to support the important work done by those volunteers and others who have done such a great job.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this year World Oceans Day is focused on stopping marine debris. However, Liberal and Conservative governments have failed to clean up abandoned vessels littering our coasts. These vessels are a major source of oil spills and pollution, and they threaten jobs in aquaculture, commercial fishing, and tourism.

The recent Liberal announcement is a drop in the bucket. Of the thousands of abandoned vessels littering Canada's three coasts, exactly how many will \$1 million clean up each year? Can the minister give us a number?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are extremely proud of the fact that we announced the oceans protection plan last November, an unprecedented \$1.5-billion plan to improve marine safety. A component of that is cleaning up abandoned and derelict vessels.

Recently I announced an abandoned vessels program for small vessels. I want to assure my colleague that this is only the beginning. This is an ongoing program, and there will be more to come in the months ahead.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this House unanimously passed a motion from my colleague, the member for Fundy Royal, to study Atlantic immigration and the retention of newcomers.

For 10 years, the Harper Conservatives ignored and insulted Atlantic Canada, and after yesterday, it looks like the NDP has sided with the Conservatives. On this side of the House, all 183 of us proudly support Atlantic Canada and our colleague from Fundy Royal.

Can the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship please update this House on what our government is doing to support prosperity and economic growth in my region of Atlantic Canada?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my 32 colleagues from Atlantic Canada for their strong leadership and advocacy.

[Translation]

Immigration is an engine for economic growth.

[English]

That is why our government launched the Atlantic immigration pilot program as part of the Atlantic growth strategy. This program will attract and retain skilled newcomers through an innovative partnership with employers, provincial governments, and settlement agencies.

Regardless of whether people are from Toronto, Vancouver, or Calgary, the success and vitality of Atlantic Canada is essential for all Canadians.

* * *

•(1445)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of National Defence presented Canadians with a book of empty promises. In two years the Liberals have failed to deliver a single piece of military equipment, and they do not plan on buying anything for our troops until after the next election.

The Prime Minister already believes that our troops are appropriately provisioned. The Minister of National Defence cannot explain where the money is going to come from. When the Minister of Finance was asked about this yesterday, he said, “Go ask the defence minister.” I will.

Where is the money going to come from?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the minister on having led the most extensive defence consultation in 20 years, and above all, for zealously overseeing the new defence policy.

Thanks to this new policy, big changes are on the way over the next few years. The Canadian Armed Forces will be properly

Oral Questions

funded. The budget will be increased by more than 70% over the next 10 years, for a total increase of \$32.7 billion.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Minister for accepting most of the Conservative Party's recommendations for the new defence policy.

Unfortunately, we see a little problem with the Liberal accounting architecture. Page 11 of the policy promises that the cost presentation is transparent and fully funded. Someone should tell the Minister of Finance, because he did not know that yesterday.

Can the Minister of Finance or the Minister of National Defence assure the House that the defence budget is indeed confirmed and tell us exactly where that money will come from?

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our policy has been the subject of rigorous costing, and its funding is realistic and affordable. Our costing was supported by external experts, and our methodology underwent additional review by five external accounting firms.

The funding needed to support this policy was budgeted and will come from the Minister of Finance's fiscal framework.

* * *

[English]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' dithering on the softwood file just keeps getting worse. We learned this week that Obama's visit, expected to result in the signing of the softwood lumber agreement, cost Canadians \$4.8 million, with nothing to show for it, while hundreds of thousands of good-paying Canadian jobs are being lost and are at risk. Now we find out that lumber remanufacturers are paying twice as much as regular mills.

Why is the Prime Minister refusing to protect the softwood lumber industry, specifically our remanufacturers?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's forest industry sustains hundreds of thousands of good-paying jobs across our country. Our government will continue to fight vigorously to defend the interests of Canadian workers and companies in the face of actions taken by the U.S. that are completely without merit. We are taking decisive and immediate action to help Canadians who are affected by these unfair and punitive damages. We are making investments to diversify forest products and markets for our producers, supporting workers, and providing financial products and services on commercial terms.

We stand firmly behind the Canadian forest industry and are supporting its long-term health and prosperity.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to softwood lumber, we do not want just any agreement, as they say, we want an agreement that will benefit our industry. How is it that as soon as the U.S. announced its surtax the Government of Quebec was able to announce an assistance program for the entire industry the very same day, but it took Ottawa six weeks to come up with a financial assistance program? What is more, this government has been negotiating an agreement for 20 months with nothing to show for it.

How can the thousands of Canadian workers trust this Liberal government? It has been 20 months.

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): I agree, Mr. Speaker, the previous Conservative government allowed the agreement to lapse. The Department of Trade's taxable countervailing duties are punitive and unfair. We will go before the courts and we will win, as we have every time. This will be the fifth time.

The Prime Minister spoke with the President at the G7 summit and on many other occasions. We want a good agreement, not just any agreement. That takes time, but we will come out on top.

* * *

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Prime Minister if he would support the marine debris cleanup currently under way on Vancouver Island. He responded that the oceans protection plan would help protect our coast. Nice words, but that is all they are. There is no mention of marine debris in the government's oceans protection plan and no money for cleaning it up. As we see more and more cargo traffic off our coast, and the level of plastic in the oceans continue to rise, why do the Liberals have no plan to clean up marine debris?

● (1450)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the fact that our oceans protection plan goes way beyond anything that has ever been done in this country. I recognize that the issue that has been brought up by the member is an issue that is occurring more and more. It is certainly something we can look at, but I am very proud of the fact that we have made an unprecedented commitment to marine safety on the three coasts of our country. This is a new first for Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

DAIRY INDUSTRY

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brousseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with less than a month to go before the comprehensive economic and trade agreement, or CETA, comes into force, we still have no clue how the transition plan or the tariff quotas will work.

The Liberals promised to fully compensate the dairy industry for losses incurred as a result of CETA, but the amounts announced fall far short, so much so that the Quebec government says it is prepared

to delay CETA's implementation as long as there is no real compensation for the dairy industry.

When will the government act, stand up and compensate the dairy industry for losses caused by CETA?

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's question and concern.

Our government fully supports the supply management system and will continue to support the supply management system. We have consulted the dairy farmers and processors across this country for a number of months and have come up with a program of \$350 million: \$250 million so our dairy farmers can innovate, and \$100 million so our processors can innovate and be on the cutting edge.

This government has and will continue to make sure that our supply management system continues to thrive in this country.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the past week the Liberals have refused to answer straightforward questions about whether they plan to cancel a publicly accessible registry for high-risk sex offenders. What do the Liberals have to hide? Should Canadians take the Liberals' non-answer as a yes, that indeed they plan to cancel this tool for parents to keep their kids safe from high-risk sex offender, yes or no?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, public safety and the safety of children are always a priority, and I am sure that is true for all members of this House.

The national sex offender registry was created and funded in 2004 by former public safety minister Anne McLellan. It is a tool, a very effective tool, for ensuring that high-risk offenders are identified. When a potentially dangerous offender is about to be released, the correctional service alerts the police. If there is a danger, the police alert the public. Police and communities working constructively together is how best to make sure our children—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): That sounds like a no, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

Speaking about marijuana, yesterday the Prime Minister said, "...until the law is changed, the law remains the law." Implementing a public registry of high-risk sex offenders is the law, as well.

If the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness shares the opinion of his Prime Minister, what is he waiting for to enforce the law and implement the new registry? If money is the issue, what is the holdup? We already have a \$30-billion deficit; our children's protection is certainly worth more than that.

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the law is the national sex offender registry, created in 2004 by former minister McLellan, and it works very effectively.

In 2015, the Harper government passed legislation to create another database, but it was never actually set up, and it was never funded by the previous government.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there they go again, protecting the criminals.

When the Prime Minister introduced his mandatory “Ottawa knows best” carbon tax, he promised Canadians it would be federally revenue neutral. That is not true. Research from the Library of Parliament clearly shows that the Prime Minister will take millions of dollars out of Alberta and British Columbia by charging GST on the carbon tax.

Will the Prime Minister stop increasing taxes on Canadians, start to keep his promises, and immediately eliminate this unfair tax on a tax?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was very proud the other day when all members of Parliament but one voted in favour of the Paris agreement. We are showing that Canada is committed to serious climate action. We understand that as part of any serious plan, we need to have a price on pollution.

I would ask the party opposite if it supports putting a price on pollution, fostering the innovation we need to create good jobs and grow our economy.

* * *

• (1455)

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Doug Eyolfson (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this month, young Canadians in my riding of Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley and across the country will be graduating from high school and getting ready to start the next phase of their education. Demand for skilled tradespeople is growing in our country. A job in the skilled trades is a promising career.

Would the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour please update this House on actions our government has taken to help youth enter the skilled trades?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that an education in the skilled trades leads to good-paying jobs in our country. Earlier this year, I attended the regional Skills Canada competition event in my hometown of Thunder Bay, and just last week I was in Winnipeg for the national competition, where over 500 youth from across Canada competed in 40 events.

Investment in the union training and innovation program, indigenous job training, and the expansion of the student loans

Oral Questions

and grants program will help young Canadians pursue their studies in the skilled trades.

* * *

[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in April, the Minister of Transport announced 131 new rail safety projects and handed out over \$20 million in grants.

Unfortunately, the only rail safety project submitted by the community of Lac-Mégantic was rejected out of hand by Transport Canada. The project would have trained first responders in case of a disaster, drawing on the experience gained from the tragedy of July 6, 2013. The minister had a unique opportunity, in his own department, to put words into action.

Why did the minister fail the people of Lac-Mégantic?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we applaud the work of the Institut en culture de sécurité industrielle Mégantic. The project is being examined with great interest. It is important to train first responders in the event of a disaster. The institute in Lac-Mégantic has submitted interesting proposals, which we are currently reviewing.

My colleague mentioned the 131 grade crossing projects. This \$55-million initiative should be applauded.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the 2017-18 Parks Canada departmental plan says it will address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report's call to action no. 79 by expanding the presentation and commemoration of indigenous histories and cultures in Parks Canada's heritage places, but a recent Parks Canada RFP for exhibit writing does not require a focus on indigenous history or require working with or even consulting with indigenous groups.

Will the minister withdraw the RFP and ensure that all future Parks Canada RFPs meet the spirit of the reconciliation report?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for his advocacy on behalf of parks but also with respect to indigenous peoples. There is no more important relationship than our relationship with indigenous peoples. We take very seriously our duty to accommodate and consult in accordance with our constitutional and international obligations. I will look into this matter and I commit to get back to the member as soon as possible.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is working to support the middle class by diversifying trade and updating existing agreements.

The Table de concertation de Laval en condition féminine works to promote gender equality. This week, the minister and his Chilean counterpart signed a modernized agreement that includes a chapter on trade and gender equality.

Can the parliamentary secretary tell the House why this chapter in the modernized Canada-Chile Free Trade Agreement is so important?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has just marked another milestone. We are very proud of this new chapter on gender equality in the Canada-Chile Free Trade Agreement. This is a first for a G20 country.

The new chapter acknowledges the importance of applying gender perspective to trade issues to ensure that economic growth benefits everyone and of encouraging women's participation in the market.

That is what progressive trade means to our government.

* * *

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the last nine months, the veterans affairs committee has heard gut-wrenching, heartbreaking testimony from many of our veterans who are suffering from the side effects of mefloquine. They have implored the government for medical help. Now that the surgeon general has finally shared his report on mefloquine, it affirms the testimony of these veterans by finally relegating mefloquine as a drug of last resort for our troops.

What remediation and assistance is the government going to provide to those who were required to take mefloquine and are now suffering the consequences?

● (1500)

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Veterans Affairs works hard each and every day to provide veterans and their families with the care and support they need when and where they need it. Regardless of whether veterans need help from any time they have served our country, whether abroad or here at home in service of any kind, Veterans Affairs is there to answer the phone, to support, and to help them. We encourage those who need help to come forward and we will be there to assist them through any process they wish to go through with us.

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister has made some interesting announcements on his defence policy, such as the one on increasing the number of women and promoting diversity. However, the minister failed to say anything about French as a language of work in the forces.

For a francophone in the navy the language of work is English. In the special forces it is English. In the national training courses it is always English.

When will the minister of defence and his department start respecting francophones and give them the necessary units so that they can serve their country in French?

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am quite surprised by the member's statement because in the riding of Saint-Jean we announced that bilingual military training would be reinstated at the military college.

The funding for implementing this policy has already been allocated and the announcement is already bearing fruit. There are more than 70 new candidates in the college courses because they know that there will be bilingual university training at the Royal Military College Saint-Jean.

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is great that we are talking about training, but I am talking about working and operational units. From my experience in my career, Ottawa is tone deaf when it comes to French in the forces.

[English]

“If you don't understand, ask a friend.”

[Translation]

That is something we have heard often. French deserves to have a place and must be respected. The government puts out a defence policy every 10 years and it gets updated, but there has still not been any progress. There is not a single word about French in it.

When will the government take responsibility and give the air, land, and sea branches of the armed forces the number of French units they need?

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is vital for the armed forces and for the Government of Canada to have bilingual troops. That was obvious with all the flooding in Quebec. All the troops that were on the ground but one were francophones from Quebec, and I can say that this was very reassuring for all Quebecers.

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to the Standing Orders, a member of the House cannot intentionally mislead Parliament. Sometimes it is an honest mistake and that is why I wanted to give the minister of industry a chance to correct himself.

In a press release from Norsat on June 2, it said, “the Minister responsible for the Investment Canada Act...has served notice that there will be no order for review of the transaction under subsection 25.3(1) of the Act.”

There is a difference between a screening and a systematic, real national security review that has to be ordered by the minister. He knows that because he is the one who chose not to order a national security review.

I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to look at the answers that we had from the minister, which contradict the facts, and make sure that our rights as parliamentarians to get true answers in the House are respected.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, further to the point of order raised by my hon. colleague, I would also like to point out that the letter that was actually sent to Norsat said as follows, “there will be no order for review of the transaction under subsection 25.3 (1)”, which governs national security reviews.

Further, it is important that we get some evidence from the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness since this decision is taken only in consultation with him.

• (1505)

[Translation]

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Outremont for raising that question.

[English]

I thank the hon. member for Milton for her intervention. I will consider the matter and come back to the House if necessary.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

CANNABIS ACT

The House resumed from June 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-45, an act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code and other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: It being 3:05 p.m., pursuant to order made May 30, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment of the member for Niagara Falls to the motion for second reading of Bill C-45.

Call in the members.

Government Orders

• (1510)

[English]

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 311)

YEAS

Members

Aboutaif	Albas
Albrecht	Anderson
Arnold	Barlow
Benzen	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boucher	Brassard
Brown	Calkins
Carrie	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Cooper	Deltell
Doherty	Dreeshen
Eglinski	Falk
Finley	Gallant
Généreux	Genus
Godin	Gourde
Harder	Kelly
Kent	Kniec
Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacKenzie
Maguire	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Motz	Nicholson
Paul-Hus	Poillievre
Raitt	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Saroya
Schmale	Shields
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Stubbs
Sweet	Tilson
Trost	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Viersen
Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Watts
Waugh	Webber
Wong	Yurdiga
Zimmer — 77	

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Aubin
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Beech	Bennett
Benson	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boudrias	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Bratina
Brisson	Brosseau
Caesar-Chavannes	Cannings
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Chan
Chen	Choquette
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Donnelly
Drouin	Dubé
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault

Government Orders

Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Fry	Fuhr
Garneau	Garrison
Gerretsen	Gill
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Hajdu	Hardcastle
Hardie	Harvey
Hehr	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Iacono
Johns	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Julian	Kang
Khalid	Khera
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Laverdière	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lemieux	Leslie
Levitt	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Malcolmson	Maloney
Marcil	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Medicino
Mihychuk (Soeurs)	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des- Soeurs)
Moore	Morneau
Morrissey	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nassif	Nault
Ng	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Pauzé
Peschisolido	Peterson
Philpott	Picard
Quach	Qualtrough
Rankin	Ratansi
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Saganash	Sahota
Saini	Samson
Sangha	Sarai
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sorbara
Spengemann	Ste-Marie
Stetski	Stewart
Tabbara	Tassi
Thériault	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Weir
Whalen	Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid — 199	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

[Translation]

The next question is on the main motion.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.**Some hon. members:** No.**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.**Some hon. members:** Yea.**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.**Some hon. members:** Nay.**The Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.*And five or more members having risen:*

● (1520)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 312)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Aubin
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Beech	Bennett
Benson	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boudrias	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Bratina
Brison	Brosseau
Caesar-Chavannes	Cannings
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Chan
Chen	Choquette
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Donnelly
Drouin	Dubé
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseau
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Fry	Fuhr
Garneau	Garrison
Gerretsen	Gill
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Hajdu	Hardcastle
Hardie	Harvey
Hehr	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Iacono
Johns	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Julian	Kang
Khalid	Khera
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)

Laverdière
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Lockhart
Longfield
MacGregor
Malcolmson
Marcil
Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Soeurs)
Moore
Morrisey
Murray
Nassif
Ng
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peschisolido
Philpott
Quach
Rankin
Reid
Robillard
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Samson
Sarai
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Tassi
Vandal
Vaughan
Weir
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj

LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lighbound
Long
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
Morneau
Mulcair
Nantel
Nault
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Pauzé
Peterson
Picard
Qualtrough
Ratansi
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rudd
Saganash
Saini
Sangha
Schiefke
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Stetski
Tabbara
Thériault
Vandenbeld
Virani
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Zahid— 200

NAYS

Members

Aboultarif
Albrecht
Arnold
Benzen
Berthold
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boucher
Brown
Carrie
Clarke
Cooper
Doherty
Eglinski
Finley
Généreux
Godin
Harder
Kent
Lake
Liepert
Lukiwski
Maguire
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Motz
Paul-Hus
Raitt
Rempel
Saroya
Shields

Albas
Anderson
Barlow
Bergen
Bezan
Block
Brassard
Calkins
Chong
Clement
Deltell
Dreeshen
Falk
Gallant
Genius
Gourde
Kelly
Kmiec
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lobb
MacKenzie
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Nicholson
Poilievre
Rayes
Richards
Schmale
Sopuck

Business of the House

Sorenson	Stanton
Stubbs	Sweet
Tilson	Trost
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Viersen	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin
Watts	Waugh
Webber	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer— 76

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Health.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the government House leader if she could please tell us what business the House will be doing this week and next week. I recognize the days are long and a lot of different bills are crammed into each day. I know a lot is going on.

With that in mind, I want to remind her, and I believe I speak on behalf of the NDP as well, that we would be interested in working together with the government if the Liberals are looking at making any changes to the Standing Orders. If that were to come forward before we rise, I know it would be good for all of us if we could work together on that.

● (1525)

[Translation]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, we will continue the debate we began this morning on the NDP opposition day motion.

This evening, we will return to Bill C-24, an act to amend the Salaries Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Financial Administration Act. Following that, we will begin second reading of Bill C-50 on political financing.

Tomorrow will be dedicated to debating Bill C-44 on the budget.

[English]

As for next week, our hope is to make progress on a number of bills, including Bill C-6 concerning citizenship; Bill C-50 respecting political financing; Bill C-49, transportation modernization; and Bill S-3, amendments to the Indian Act.

Finally, next Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday shall be allotted days.

As the member very well knows, I always look forward to working with all members. I look forward to continuing our conversation.

*Privilege***PRIVILEGE**ALLEGED PREMATURE DISCLOSURE OF CONTENTS OF BILL C-49—
SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on May 17, by the hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek concerning the alleged premature disclosure of the contents of Bill C-49, an act to amend the Canada Transportation Act and other acts respecting transportation and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank the hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek for having raised this matter, as well as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona for their submissions.

[*English*]

In raising this question of privilege, the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek explained that the media had made public specific details contained in Bill C-49 before it was introduced in the House. By drawing comparisons between what was revealed in several news reports from Monday, May 15 and the contents of the bill which was introduced in the House on Tuesday, May 16, she alleged that the required confidentiality before the unveiling of the legislation in the House was simply not respected and members' privileges were breached as a result.

The member stated her belief that this was not due to a simple accidental leak but, rather, was the result of a systemic advance briefing of the media.

[*Translation*]

For his part, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader contended that at no time had the government prematurely divulged any details of Bill C-49; rather, it had simply held extensive consultations on the review of the Canada Transportation Act, as is the government's prerogative. He added that the minister and his staff were clearly aware of the need for confidentiality, declining to comment on any specifics of the bill when asked by the media.

[*English*]

The right of the House to first access to legislation is one of our oldest conventions. It does and must, however, coexist with the need of governments to consult widely, with the public and stakeholders alike, on issues and policies in the preparation of legislation. Speaker Parent explained on February 21, 2000, at page 3767 of *Debates*:

Although the members of the House should always be the first ones to examine legislation after it has been introduced and read the first time, this rule must be balanced against the need for the government to consult both experts and the public when developing its legislative proposals.

[*Translation*]

When ruling on a similar matter on November 1, 2006, Speaker Milliken concluded that the government had not divulged confidential information on the bill, nor the bill itself, but rather had engaged in consultations prior to finalizing the legislation in

question. At the same time, he explained at page 4540 of the *House of Commons Debates*:

The key procedural point...is that once a bill has been placed on notice, it must remain confidential until introduced in the House.

In acknowledging this important nuance, he made room for both consultation and confidentiality, but also saw the distinction between the two.

● (1530)

[*English*]

In the case before us, the Chair is asked to determine if the level of detail reported upon by various media outlets in advance of the tabling in the House of Bill C-49 constitutes sufficient proof of a leak of the contents of this bill, and thus constitutes a prima facie breach of the member's privileges. In examining the bill, and noting the obvious similarities to the information cited in the media, the Chair can appreciate the seriousness of the matter raised.

[*Translation*]

When ruling on a similar question of privilege on April 19, 2016, I found a prima facie case of privilege in relation to the premature disclosure of Bill C-14, an act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other acts (medical assistance in dying). In that particular case, the government had acknowledged the premature disclosure of the bill while assuring the House that this had not been authorized and would not happen again. In other words, the facts were undisputed.

[*English*]

That is not the case with the situation before us. The parliamentary secretary has assured the House that the government did not share the bill before it was introduced in the House but conceded that extensive consultations were conducted. Nor is the Chair confronted with a situation where a formal briefing session was provided to the media but not to members.

Finally, it is a long established practice to take members at their word, and the Chair, in view of this particular set of circumstances, is prepared to accept the explanation of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

In the absence of evidence that members have been prevented from conducting their parliamentary functions due to the premature release of the bill itself, I cannot find that a prima facie case of privilege exists in this case.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, [*Member spoke in Cree*]

[*English*]

I rise on a point of privilege of prima facie.

[*Member spoke in Cree and provided the following translation:*]

I am proud to be here.

[English]

On May 4, 2017, I rose in the House of Commons to speak on important issues of violence being committed against indigenous women. In order to make a larger impact, it was felt that it would be appropriate to speak in nehiyo, or the Cree language. Even though I had provided documentation to the translation and interpretative services 48 hours prior to my speaking on May 4, 2017, they were unable to provide a time-appropriate translation during members' statements under Standing Order 31.

It is my belief that my parliamentary privileges have been violated because I could not be understood by my fellow parliamentarians and Canadians viewing the proceedings, thus negating the debate and point that I wished to make. I was effectively silenced, and even though I had the floor and had been duly recognized, my speech was not translated, rendering me silent and thus violating the parliamentary privileges of all MPs present in this chamber. Imagine for an instance if a French Canadian spoke in the House but no translation and interpretative services were provided.

It is my belief that parliamentarians have a constitutionally protected right to use indigenous languages in Parliament. Subsection 35(1) of the Constitution Act, 1982 states:

The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.

Do language rights fall within these provisions?

Professor Karen Drake has written about indigenous language rights in Canada as pre-existing the Canadian state, and these rights have not been extinguished and are still present.

Others, like David Leitch and Lorena Fontaine, have been working towards launching a constitutional challenge, arguing that under subsection 35(1), the federal government has not only a negative obligation not to stifle aboriginal languages but a positive obligation to provide the resources necessary to revitalize those languages.

The latter claim is perhaps the most challenging, while the former is more straightforward. Though the test for establishing an aboriginal right under subsection 35(1) has ballooned into a labyrinth of steps, sub-steps, and sub-sub-steps, the core of the test has remained relatively consistent since the Supreme Court of Canada decision in *Van der Peet*:

...in order to be an aboriginal right an activity must be an element of a practice, custom or tradition integral to the distinctive culture of the aboriginal group claiming the right.

Many, including me, argue that indigenous languages easily meet this test. As Leitch puts it, "there is no more distinguishing feature of most cultures than their languages."

Other arguments also focus on the inherent connection between language and culture, as illustrated by the way in which indigenous languages structure indigenous knowledge.

An additional nuance can be added to this argument. The Supreme Court of Canada's jurisprudence recognizes that the practices, customs, and traditions protected by subsection 35(1) include the laws of aboriginal peoples.

Privilege

At least some aboriginal languages reflect aboriginal laws. As Doris Pratt and Harry Bone explain:

Our languages are sacred gifts, given to us by the Creator. They carry our way of life, our views of the world, our history, our laws and they bind us to each other.

Thus, at least some aboriginal languages are integral to their respective cultures, not merely insofar as to reflect those cultures, but also insofar as they reflect the laws that are included within the practices, customs, and traditions protected by subsection 35(1).

The analysis thus far may support a negative right to be free from government laws prohibiting aboriginal peoples from speaking aboriginal languages, pursuant to subsection 35(1) and subsection 52 (1) of the Constitution Act, 1982.

However, the real issue is whether aboriginal peoples have the right to use their own languages at public expense; in other words, whether governments have a positive obligation to provide aboriginal peoples with government services in aboriginal languages.

Commentators have answered this question in the affirmative by appealing to the Supreme Court's jurisprudence on Canada's official languages.

According to the majority in *R. v. Beaulac*, 1999:

Language rights are not negative rights, or passive rights; they can only be enjoyed if the means are provided.

Additional arguments in support of a positive language right can be deduced from the section 35 jurisprudence itself. The Supreme Court has emphasized that the purpose of section 35 is to promote reconciliation between aboriginal peoples and non-aboriginal peoples in Canada. Section 35 should be applied and interpreted in the light of this purpose.

● (1535)

After spending six years gathering 6,750 statements from residential school survivors and others, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada concluded that reconciliation requires the preservation and revitalization of aboriginal languages, and it issued numerous calls to action on the topic, one of which states:

The federal government has a responsibility to provide sufficient funds for Aboriginal-language revitalization and preservation.

Language figures prominently in the commission's analysis because the very purpose of the residential school system was the destruction of indigenous cultures and language for the sake of assimilating indigenous peoples into a non-indigenous culture. Children were prohibited from speaking in indigenous languages both inside and outside the classroom. As Leitch notes, no other cultural group in Canada has been subject to a state-sponsored attempt to eradicate its language. Thus, the case for a positive obligation on governments in this context is compelling. The federal government took active steps to destroy aboriginal languages, and so reconciliation requires that it take active steps to revitalize these languages.

Privilege

Parliament is to be the representative of the people of Canada and to uphold the highest principles. Today, the Government of Canada has stated it supports the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UNDRIP, without reservation. Article 13 of UNDRIP states, “Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize... and transmit to future generations their...languages”, and “[s]tates shall take effective measures to ensure this right is protected...”.

In December of 2016, the Prime Minister stated he was ready to introduce an aboriginal languages act. While there are no laws or rules specifically protecting or governing the use of indigenous languages here in Parliament, it is my belief that, since aboriginal rights are pre-existing, they should be considered a right. While that has not been exercised or supported, it is nonetheless still existing. Cree, because it is my indigenous language, nehiyo, should be considered an official language in the House of Commons. Standing Order 1 states:

In all cases not provided for hereinafter, or by other Order of the House, procedural questions shall be decided by the Speaker or Chair of Committees of the Whole, whose decisions shall be based on the usages, forms, customs and precedents of the House of Commons of Canada and on parliamentary tradition in Canada and other jurisdictions, so far as they may be applicable to the House.

The use of indigenous languages like Cree is not foreign to Canada. The parliamentary tradition has multiple examples, and I would like to enumerate a few other examples of the use of indigenous languages in legislatures in Canada. For instance, in the most recent example, the Senate of Canada provides interpretation and translation services in Inuktitut for Inuit senators. This has been under the visionary leadership of the Hon. Charlie Watt and the Hon. Serge Joyal.

In addition, there are multiple other examples, such as the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, where indigenous languages have the opportunity for interpretation services. In Manitoba, the hon. James McKay was on the Assiniboia council under President Louis Riel, where Michif, Cree, French, English, and Gaelic languages were used. This legislative assembly was integral to the entry of the Red River, modern-day Manitoba, into Confederation. An example of the openness of the time is the Hon. James McKay. He was an indigenous Métis man of Scottish origin, from a Cree nehiyo mother, and spoke many different languages, including Cree, in official proceedings of the assemblies where he sat.

In an official history prepared by the Manitoba legislature, it is recorded that indigenous languages were used in official proceedings. James McKay was a member of the Legislative Council of Manitoba, the Manitoba upper chamber, and served as its speaker until 1874. He was then elected to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. McKay is known to be very proud of his indigenous heritage and used indigenous languages frequently. He was also a member of the North-West Council. In the second session of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia, from April 26 to May 9, when discussing the hay privilege, James McKay addressed the assembly in the Cree nehiyo language.

I hope these usages, customs, forms, and precedents can be considered as you, Mr. Speaker, craft a just and equitable response to my question of privilege concerning the translation, interpretation, and use of Canada's original languages in the people's chamber, the

House of Commons. I am looking for not only the right to use my indigenous language of nehiyo Cree in the proceedings of this House, but that Parliament provide minimal resources so I may participate fully with other members of the chamber in all activities of the House of Commons, and that all other members of the House may participate and interact fully with me in the chamber.

Tapwe akwa khitwam.

● (1540)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre for raising his question of privilege, and I will come back to the House with a ruling in due course.

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Fredericton.

I want to read the very first part of the motion the NDP has put forward:

That the House:

(a) recognize the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from any use of nuclear weapons, and recognize those consequences transcend national borders and pose grave implications for human survival, the environment, socioeconomic development, the global economy, food security, and for the health of future generations;

Let there be no doubt of the consequences, and we have seen this take place. It was not that long ago, during World War II, when communities such as Nagasaki, Japan, experienced it first-hand, and the horrific results of what had taken place. Weapons of mass destruction have always been a very real and tangible concern.

I had the opportunity to serve in the Canadian Forces for just over three years, and we would participate in parades. This would be in the early or mid-1980s, and we would have a good number of veterans in the parades who had participated and were engaged in World War II. I recall that as we would go to the Legion afterward or as we were concluding the march, there would be many comments and stories about the horrors of war. Let there be no doubt about how horrific it was.

There is no glory in being on that field, being shot at, having bombs dropped out of the skies, and the devastation that follows. I do not think there is anyone in a society who values life who sees war as a positive thing. We would like to be living in a society where war is nonexistent, but unfortunately that is not the reality of today. Unfortunately, there are countries at war. There are different sectors at war for a multitude of different reasons.

At the end of the day, we as legislators in the House of Commons in Canada have a role to play. We must demonstrate strong leadership on that world stage, something of which we should all be very proud. As a country of 36 million people, Canada carries a great deal of weight at the international level. We do have a considerable amount of influence.

Privilege

This is a government that is not scared to use that influence to be connected with the superpowers, or those countries that do have access to nuclear weaponry. From what I understand, there are nine countries that were listed off earlier: North Korea, Pakistan, Israel, India, China, France, United Kingdom, Russia, and the United States. There are thousands of weapons of a nuclear nature out there that would cause devastation if in fact they were ever used.

When I think of the nuclear weapons and the potential devastation that could be caused, I like to believe that it is a deterrent that does keep the world safe. I would like to think that there will be a point in time when they will not be necessary. It concerns me at times when we hear from some people who would say, “We can get rid of them, we just need those good countries to disarm.” If all the so-called good countries were to disarm, it would be wrong to give an impression that we would have a safer world. Nothing could be further from the truth. At the end of the day, we need to have that balance.

• (1545)

I was not quite born yet when we had the Cuban missile crisis back in 1962, but I have seen the videos and documentaries. This is a very serious issue. Presidents of the U.S. and other world leaders, and countries like Canada, have been put into positions where we need to contribute our capable and able minds to address this issue. We all hope and pray, and give thought to what we can do to prevent it from happening.

I look at what we have been able to accomplish in a relatively short time span. One of the things that is most encouraging is with regard to the fissile material cut-off treaty. That is definitely noteworthy, and members need to be aware of it. It was Canada that led the initiative that would ban the production of fissile material that provides nuclear weapons with their explosive power. While the FMCT negotiations have stalled for almost 20 years, last fall Canada led with a resolution at the UN, with co-sponsors Germany and Netherlands, that created a high level FMCT expert preparatory group aimed at elaborating the elements of a future treaty. Our resolution was supported by 159 countries. This was a historic development. Canada is chairing the process, and most states possessing nuclear weapons will participate.

This is where we see a significant difference. With what the NDP is proposing, not one nuclear state is getting engaged with it. Here, under this process, the Government of Canada is working with two other nations, pushing and getting others onside. It is something that is tangible. It is happening, and it brings people, in particular some of those who have nuclear arsenals, to the table. That is very encouraging and positive.

I started off by saying, as a nation of 36 million people, and the population of the world at six billion-plus and growing rapidly, we carry a great deal of influence. That was demonstrated last fall.

There are other things we have done as government. I made reference to the importance of weapons of mass destruction. Global Affairs works to prevent weapons of mass destruction, and has a proclamation to prevent WMD terrorism through the weapons of mass destruction threat reduction program. Not only is it words, there is a commitment of \$73 million this year. This is tangible and

taking place. Our government not only talks about the issue, but we are walking, and in fact leading in many ways.

This is an issue that has been debated in the chamber in the past. It has been debated within our own party. It has been debated and discussed among many of our constituents. We all care about future peace throughout the world. We all like to believe we are taking strides toward it. There will be significant issues in the years ahead that we will need to overcome.

• (1550)

What is important is that we continue, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs says, to look at our partners in the world, co-operate and work with our partners, recognizing that Canada does have a role as a middle power, and we can have a significant impact, something that has been clearly demonstrated by this government in the last year alone.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member across the way mentioned programs to reduce the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Would he not consider nuclear warheads as the very definition of a weapon of mass destruction?

• (1555)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, that virtually goes without saying. When we look at the couple of incidents, and the impact on the world that took place during World War II, it was complete devastation. Communities were literally destroyed. People are living today as a direct result of all sorts of issues, whether it is psychological or physical. It has killed so many.

Weapons of mass destruction are not just nuclear. We need to recognize that, because as much as we want to diminish the number of nuclear arsenals out there, let us not just focus on that. There are other areas where weapons are used for mass destruction, and Canada, much like it does on the nuclear side, can play a leadership role on other instruments of war that cause mass destruction.

I am very proud, for example, of what Lloyd Axworthy and Jean Chrétien, the former Prime Minister, did on the land mine treaty. These are initiatives that really make a difference.

In many ways the NDP will dream about things. They will say, “This is what we want”, but the reality is that we cannot necessarily have things the way we might ideally want to see them overnight. It takes time. It means working with the many different world partners. As I say, it was not easy, but Canada led 159 nations, bringing that group together to assist in dealing with issues related to nuclear weaponry.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I completely support the supply day motion. I first raised this issue in the House on October 25, 2016, that these negotiations were to begin, and that Canada should play a leadership role. I raised it again on February 22, 2017. I am very concerned that Canada is not there.

I was one of 900 recipients of the Order of Canada who have asked that Canada play a leadership role in these negotiations, so I put it to the hon. member. He is absolutely right that Canada played a lead role in the effort to get rid of land mines, and we undertook those negotiations knowing that both countries that used land mines the most were not at the table.

Privilege

The United States and Russia were not at the table. They plan to modernize their nuclear weapons regime. I was a watcher during the Cuban missile crisis. I remember it. We do not want our children to have nuclear nightmares. We must negotiate at the UN for nuclear disarmament. I hope the Liberals will reconsider.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the most important thing I can do in response to the member is to assure the leader we have a government that is, in fact, progressing and moving forward on the issue, as I have indicated. Canada led 159 countries in bringing forward a UN resolution that brings nuclear powers to the table to work pragmatically toward disarmament through a fissile material cut-off treaty. The fissile material is the explosive stuff. That is what causes the reactions. This is Canada playing a leadership role on the important file where we have nuclear power states at the table with us. We can all be proud of that fact.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to focus on the importance of Canada's role in multilateral institutions, but I will begin by being clear. Nuclear disarmament is our goal, and we are taking important steps to achieve it. It is this government's view that we want a world free of nuclear weapons for our children and grandchildren.

In 2016, for the first time ever, under our government, Canada rallied 159 states, including states with nuclear weapons, which all supported and passed a resolution calling for a fissile material cut-off treaty, a substantive step toward global disarmament. This is a concrete step toward the phasing-out of nuclear weapons, and crucially it included both nuclear and non-nuclear countries.

[*Translation*]

The world is evolving at an incredible pace and rapid innovation has become a global imperative.

Global interconnectedness and interdependence mean that no country can face the world's challenges or contribute to the promotion of international opportunities alone. Given that climate change knows no borders, and neither do pandemics, cashflows, the movements of migrants and refugees, terrorism or organized crime, the countries of the world need to come together to manage their joint responsibilities and take the necessary collective action to work toward a more peaceful world that is more prosperous and sustainable.

Multilateral institutions, both at the international and regional levels, are the forums that will allow us to come together to determine the immediate actions to be taken and to pave the way to the future.

Canada is proud of its history and its contributions to multilateralism, as can be seen in our involvement in multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, the G7, the G20, the Francophonie and the Commonwealth, NATO, the Organization of American States, APEC, the WTO, the Arctic Council and international financial institutions. Evolving global dynamics foster a growing interest in leadership that is based on the values espoused by Canada.

At the recent G7 meetings in Italy, the Prime Minister reaffirmed Canada's national and international commitments and urged member

states to work toward a consensus on climate change, rules-based multilateral trade and the benefits of a properly managed immigration system.

Next year, Charlevoix, Quebec will play host to the world's most influential political leaders, so they can discuss world issues that matter most to Canadians. Drawing inspiration from Italy's presidency in 2017, Canada will use the event as a platform to promote our priorities, which are to build a solid middle class, advance the cause of gender equality, fight climate change and promote diversity and inclusion.

Each multilateral forum gives Canada the chance to make its presence felt in the world. Ahead of our G7 presidency and thanks to our campaign to get a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for the 2021-2022 mandate, we have a unique opportunity to highlight Canada's value proposition, which is to be a fair, inclusive, innovative and dynamic unifying force within multilateral institutions and defend fundamental principles. We have a lot to offer and a lot on which to draw.

● (1600)

When we think of international co-operation, the United Nations immediately comes to mind. Whether it is a question of establishing global health standards, maintaining peace and security, stabilizing financial markets, enforcing aviation rules, standing up for human rights, sharing reliable meteorological and climate data, helping refugees, regulating the use of outer space for peaceful purposes, taking action to address climate change or increase agricultural capabilities, the United Nations has a significant impact on the lives of ordinary people around the world every single day.

Canada is proud to be a long-time supporter of the United Nations, and this includes being one of its founding members in 1945 and one of its major financial contributors. With its 193 member states, the United Nations is the most inclusive and legitimate forum for establishing global standards, intervening on global issues, and promoting global action.

The key sustainable development goals of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development illustrate how the United Nations can convince the entire world to work together towards a common goal.

Canada's increased commitment to international human rights has not gone unnoticed. The promotion and protection of human rights is an integral part of Canada's constructive engagement in the world. We see human rights as universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. There is a growing need for Canadian leadership on issues such as respect for diversity and the rights of girls and women.

Moreover, Canada works with other countries to establish new multilateral coalitions that are looking to adopt innovative approaches on emerging issues. For example, Canada is one of the founding members of the Freedom Online Coalition, a multilateral coalition of 30 governments whose objective is to increase awareness on human rights online and Internet freedom, as well as establishing standards in this respect.

Canada is also a member of the Community of Democracies, another multilateral coalition of 30 countries dedicated to strengthening democratic institutions and associated standards. In addition, Canada will co-chair the Equal Rights Coalition, a new international forum that advocates for the fundamental rights of LGBTQ2 people.

• (1605)

[English]

Clearly, there are growing opportunities for Canadian leadership at multilateral tables. To take advantage of them, we need to continue to demonstrate innovative, dynamic, and timely thought leadership.

Our view is that the next step toward a world free of nuclear weapons is the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty. This is an initiative led by Canada that would ban the production of fissile material. Last fall, Canada led a historic UN resolution, with co-sponsors Germany and Netherlands, that created a high-level FMCT expert preparatory group aimed at elaborating elements of a future treaty. This was supported by 159 countries in the UN General Assembly.

To close, ultimately Canada believes that we are one people sharing one planet and that our collective peace and prosperity can only be achieved through diverse and meaningful partnerships. When it comes to a ban on nuclear weapons and all other matters, we look toward our multilateral allies to help us in this effort. In building a better world, we know that multilateralism recognizes that we are stronger when we stand together.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague with interest. When it comes to the Liberal government, there is a lot of talk, but little action. My colleague speaks about a rules-based multilateral system. I have two questions for him.

First of all, is my colleague aware that article VI of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, of which Canada is part, requires that Canada participate in good faith negotiations on nuclear disarmament? It would follow, then, that Canada is in breach of a convention it has ratified.

There has been a lot of rhetoric about international co-operation, and the government claims to be very proud of Canada's initiative. However, while 130 other countries are ready to work on the convention, yesterday, the Prime Minister stated that what they were doing was useless. Maybe he said that because this is not a Canadian initiative?

Does my colleague believe that these 130 countries will want to do the government any favours when the time comes to vote for a seat on the UN Security Council?

• (1610)

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Mr. Speaker, I thank my honourable NDP counterpart. Like me, she strongly supports Canada's leadership within multilateral institutions.

The fissile material cut-off treaty is one example of our leadership within multilateral organizations; Canada brought together all 159 states to support and adopt the resolution establishing the treaty.

Privilege

This is a concrete example of Canada assuming a leadership role as arbiter of peace; indeed, Canada never stops actively pursuing leadership roles on the international stage.

[English]

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no debate takes place outside of a context, and I want to paint a picture of the context in which this debate does take place.

As an example, the Russians are refurbishing their nuclear capabilities with both bombers and missiles, and we are not even able to get them to co-operate on Syria. Similarly, China at the present time is not a particular nuclear threat, but it cannot seem to get its client state, North Korea, to back off on literally threatening the world with nuclear weapons. That is the context in which this debate takes place.

I would be interested in the hon. member's comments on, effectively, the requirement to keep up mutually assured destruction, MAD, while these negotiations take place so that we can, as a community of nations, get ourselves out of this very dangerous situation.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for Scarborough—Guildwood and commend him on his years of service and study and advocacy on this and many other issues as they relate to Canada's role in the world. I certainly take his advice seriously whenever he willingly offers it and I ask him to continue to do that.

The member will know full well that Canada views its place in the world vis-à-vis the other so-called powers of the world with open and clear eyes. We know that in order to assure ourselves of a sustainable and lasting peace and the safety and security of our country, we must work diplomatically through official and other channels. We must also continue to support a progressive trade agenda that helps empower our own nation and other nations of the world. We must continue to invest in development and we must have a strong military. We see these pieces well on view when it comes to the leadership provided by this government.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Canadians have a long tradition of discouraging the arms race and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In fact, in my own riding of Kootenay—Columbia, two communities formed, in part, around their beliefs in pacifism.

The Doukhobors, who began to immigrate to Canada from Russia around 1900 and settled in the Kootenays a few years later, opposed military service. They became famous for their nude protests, which resulted in Canada's first laws against public nudity, in 1932.

Privilege

The Religious Society of Friends, also known as the Quakers, continues to be one of Canada's most active communities on issues like nuclear disarmament. We have a large Quaker community in Argenta, on the north end of Kootenay Lake. The list of famous Canadian Quakers includes Dorothy Stowe, who co-founded Greenpeace, and Muriel Duckworth, founder of the Nova Scotia Voice of Women for Peace. Both fought for nuclear disarmament, and the Quakers in Argenta are well known for their pacifism and actions for both peace and the environment.

A number of my constituents in the West Kootenay are disenfranchised Americans who chose peace over the Vietnam War. In 2016, Selkirk College graduated its first-ever class of civilian peacekeepers, ready to work around the globe to broker peace. World peace has long been a priority for the people of Kootenay—Columbia.

In 1930, Canada ratified the Geneva protocol banning gas and bacteriological weapons. We ratified the nuclear non-proliferation treaty in 1970. We have adopted bans on nuclear weapons testing, bans on weapons in outer space, and hosted the 1997 meeting that led to the Ottawa treaty, which aims at eliminating anti-personnel landmines. As recently as 2010, the House unanimously passed a motion calling for nuclear disarmament.

Perhaps Canada's greatest contribution to peace was from former Liberal prime minister, Lester B. Pearson, whose creation of our peacekeeping forces won Canada immense international respect and earned "Mike" Pearson a well-deserved Nobel Peace Prize. I hate to imagine what Pearson would say if he could see today's Liberal government renounce nuclear disarmament.

All this leads me to wonder how far we have fallen. The Liberal foreign affairs minister, this week, renounced the U.S. administration's failure to take leadership on such issues as open trade and climate change. However, the Liberals continue to follow the Americans on their approach to nuclear weapons.

Canada, which has aspirations to the UN Security Council, is boycotting the current UN progress toward nuclear disarmament. The Prime Minister, this week, said that the process and the motion we are debating today are useless because the major countries that possess nuclear weapons are refusing to participate.

This is an unacceptable change in direction for Canada. At one time, Canada would stand up to nuclear powers and declare our opposition to proliferation. We did not accept being bullied. Instead, we engaged in leadership. By saying that Canada's intervention in this critically important matter is useless, the Prime Minister is saying that Canada has no influence on the world stage.

Former prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau addressed the same issue, on February 9, 1984, but with the opposite conclusion to our current Prime Minister.

He said:

We have done more than look to our defences, Mr. Speaker. We have addressed the causes of insecurity and instability, particularly in the Third World. East-West and North-South are the four points of the political compass of our modern age. The problems of the South cannot be solved in the absence of progress on global security. Massive military expenditures are distorting economic policies and diverting resources away from global economic development. This in turn is worsening Third World instabilities that ensnare East and West and add to the insecurity of us all.

He went on to say:

Canadians, therefore, have earned the right to speak. They are telling us, the Members of this House, as people everywhere are telling their own leaders, that the danger is too near. They want their leaders to act, to accept their political responsibility, to work to reduce the nuclear threat.... Nuclear weapons exist. They probably always will. And they work, with horrible efficiency. They threaten the very future of our species. We have no choice but to manage that risk. Never again can we put the task out of our minds; nor trivialize it; nor make it routine. Nor dare we lose heart."

•(1615)

I reject the current Prime Minister's assertion that Canada is without influence. I reject his belief that working for peace and disarmament is useless. By failing to participate in the UN's work against the proliferation of nuclear weapons, we diminish our role on the global stage and we repudiate our history as peacemakers and as peacekeepers. For the Liberal members to do so, they abandon their own party's history and shun the work of Pearson and the senior Trudeau. That is as shameful as it is shocking.

Let me close by quoting Prime Minister Pearson. He said:

And I have lived since—as you have—in a period of cold war, during which we have ensured, by our achievements in the science and technology of destruction, that a third act in this tragedy of war will result in the peace of extinction.

Let us ensure that Pearson's prediction never comes true. I ask that all members of the House support peace by supporting the motion.

•(1620)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman's speech was excellent and eloquent, and in some respects, I agree with many of the sentiments. The question is the realistic context. In my view, the threat assessment comes primarily from Russia, which is upgrading its weapons systems and the ability to deliver the weapons systems. Indeed it can deliver the weapons systems undetected by our current early warning system, therefore, requiring us to do an upgrade.

Similarly, North Korea is a bit of a rogue state and threatens the immediate regional nations, and then Iran is vigorously pursuing the ability to create and deliver a nuclear weapon certainly within the region of the Middle East.

If those nations are not prepared to come to the table, does the member agree that all of the efforts that Canada has made in the last few months have been in vain, or does he think that trying to husband this fissile material treaty is in fact a worthwhile exercise?

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree that the fissile material cut-off treaty is important to work on and to be a part of, but I do not believe that Canada gets anywhere by following bad examples. People who are not willing to come to the table are setting a poor example for world peace.

Canada is about leadership and at times we say as much when we are not speaking as we do when we are. In this case, by not taking a very active role against nuclear armament and supporting nuclear disarmament, we are setting a bad example for the rest of the world.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to my colleague for his sensible, thoughtful, and heartfelt speech.

The Liberal government is obviously trying to hide behind the fissile material treaty, which may reduce nuclear weapons proliferation or make it harder to acquire nuclear weapons, but that treaty should not prevent the federal government from participating in talks about nuclear disarmament. The two are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they go hand in hand. The government is actually contradicting itself. The left hand does not know what the right is doing.

This bears all the hallmarks of the Liberal hypocrisy we have seen on a number of issues so far. They say all the right things, but they never do a thing.

[English]

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, we need to be working on every possible front when it comes to nuclear disarmament. We need to show leadership by being at the table speaking against nuclear armament and for nuclear disarmament.

I agree that hiding behind the fissile argument does not do Canada much good in terms of the world stage and how we are perceived by people outside of Canada, and in Canada as well. My constituents from Kootenay—Columbia have long supported peace in various ways. We need to do much better as a country in demonstrating that we are doing everything we can to ensure peace.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): We have time for a very brief question.

The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie

•(1625)

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question will be very brief.

Last year, at their party convention, the Liberals passed a resolution that was basically the same as our motion.

Can my colleague figure out why the government and the members on that side would turn their backs on their own party members?

[English]

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Going even a little further than that, Mr. Speaker, back in 2010 the Liberals were in favour of a nuclear ban when they were in opposition. They voted for the ban both in the House and in the Senate. They followed that up at their policy convention in Winnipeg in 2016 by reaffirming their commitment to nuclear disarmament.

When we look at what is happening right now, the only conclusion I can come to is that they are once again looking to follow the lead of the United States and, quite frankly, there are a lot

Privilege

of things going on in the United States that we should not be following.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I would like to thank my colleague from Laurier—Sainte-Marie for raising the issue of nuclear disarmament in the House. Though the topic may not make the front pages, it is essential given its seriousness and potential consequences.

On August 6, 1945, and on August 8, 1945, humanity realized that it was capable of destroying itself with its own creations, with the weapons that it was able to manufacture. In my opinion, that was a turning point in the history of warfare because, until then, we were able to exterminate, to massacre, to make war, but not to the point of destroying all of humanity. Unfortunately, since 1945, we have had that collective ability, and things have not improved since.

There is no government in the world whose greatest responsibility is not to the safety of its citizens. They carry out this responsibility in many ways, through military and police forces, so we can live in the safety of our communities, with the least amount of violence possible, and where peoples' physical safety is not threatened.

However, if that is all we do and if international tensions mount to the point of all-out nuclear war, domestic security will be of little importance; we will have forgotten one part of the equation, international relations, the ability of states to make war and the types of weapons that can exist or be used.

At the risk of sounding old, I admit that I was born in 1973. My childhood and early teen years were spent in an era that no longer exists and that younger people can only imagine, the Cold War. There was the eastern bloc, a wall and the U.S.S.R., that was always looking for babies to eat and was threatening the world order.

I come from Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, where there was a military base with hundreds, even thousands of soldiers, which was quite impressive. There was also an arms factory that made armoured vehicles near the town, making it a potential target. The military base had sirens that could sound the alarm in the event of an attack. I still remember, as a child, being terrorized by the sound of those sirens, which could be set off during exercises in the evening and even at night. The threat was more tangible at the time; watching the news, we could begin to make sense of the international context in which we were living.

Then came the collapse of the Soviet bloc, something no one saw coming. We believe that we have since enjoyed greater international security, but I believe it was a false sense of security. The dangers of nuclear proliferation are real. We would not want more countries to have this terrible weapon that can wipe out hundreds of thousands of people, even entire regions, not to mention the known medium- and long-term effects of radioactivity.

Privilege

We also do not want to go back to the time of the balance of terror, as it was called. There is a theory in political science that any power that has enough weapons to completely destroy another several times over would never dare to launch an attack, fearing mutually assured destruction. To date, that theory has proven to be true. The problem is that, if it should one day cease to hold, there will be no more political scientists left to figure out what went wrong.

I have always found the term “balance of terror” to be problematic because it implies that our lives and our societies are hanging by a thread and that, on the day the thread breaks, there goes all hope of any future political theory.

• (1630)

On a bit of a lighter note, I remember that, in the 1980s, peace activists had a bumper sticker that said, “One nuclear bomb can ruin your whole day”. It does not take many bombs to ruin a day.

I think it is important that we fully participate in the worldwide effort to come up with an international convention that focuses specifically on nuclear disarmament. That is everyone's responsibility, especially Canada's, because we used to be a leader in that regard. I think that the current Prime Minister could learn from some of the prime ministers of the past, one of whom he must know quite well, to find the inspiration needed to make the right decisions about Canada's role in these talks.

After spending decades playing a leadership role in nuclear disarmament, the fight against nuclear proliferation, and the fight against other types weapons, such as landmines, Canada should be ashamed of coming off as the lapdog of the American government and the Trump administration.

Negotiations are taking place at the United Nations for a new nuclear disarmament treaty and Canada is not at the table. Canada is boycotting the talks. That is absolutely incomprehensible and I would like to hear my Liberal colleagues explain to us the strategy behind not taking part in such important discussions involving dozens of countries. Not only are we not taking part in the discussions, but we also voted last year against a United Nations resolution on nuclear disarmament. That is a complete contradiction of Canada's traditional position—one it should keep, in my opinion.

There is neither precedent nor explanation for such a position. My Liberal colleague spoke of context earlier. The context is precisely that there are 15,000 nuclear warheads in the world, that nine countries have nuclear weapons, officially or otherwise, and that the current U.S. President wants to renew, modernize and reinvest in America's nuclear arsenal. That could launch a new arms race with other countries. To make matters worse, North Korea has officially lost control and is threatening its entire region, Asia. It has, or is trying to obtain, nuclear weapons and the ability to launch them over fairly long distances.

The urgency of the current context should compel us to get through these talks and negotiations as fast as possible and to work toward a plan to ban nuclear weapons. It has been a year since the NDP and my colleague from Laurier—Sainte-Marie asked the government to take part in these discussions. I think that today is an important day to tell all Canadians what the Liberal government's

position really is and to demonstrate its inaction, which is isolating us from the majority of countries around the world.

It does not make sense given our goal of having a safe and secure planet free from nuclear weapons. Moreover, from a policy standpoint, the Liberal government is looking to get a seat on the United Nations Security Council. We agree, but choosing to sulk in a corner instead of taking part and being content to simply follow the new American administration is not the way to get us the votes we need to obtain that seat, which we sadly lost in the past.

I would like to read an excerpt of a letter that was recently sent to the Prime Minister of the Liberal government. It is in English, so I will quickly read a few passages.

• (1635)

[*English*]

REMEMBERING HUMANITY

In their famous 1955 manifesto, Albert Einstein and Bertrand Russell called on us to “remember our humanity and forget the rest”, so in that humanitarian spirit, we call on your government to...

Respect and support multilateral efforts to rid the world of nuclear weapons by ending Canada's boycott of the current UN General Assembly negotiations of a treaty to ban all nuclear weapons and by joining the next session of talks....

[*Translation*]

That letter was signed by no fewer than 100 recipients of the Order of Canada, who feature among the most illustrious of our fellow Canadians. These people, who have received awards from the federal government, are now making a formal appeal to the government.

I hope that the government will heed the call and change its position, that it will contribute in a positive way to meeting one of the greatest challenges facing humanity.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie knows, I come from the riding of Laurentides—Labelle. In the northern part of the riding is a former nuclear base with silos for Tomahawk missiles. The nuclear issue is real. Canada was a nuclear nation in a sense because it housed U.S. missiles. I completely agree that the world should get rid of nuclear weapons.

I have a question for my colleague: how does he plan to force North Korea, Russia, and the United States to get rid of their nuclear weapons?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

What is the NDP's plan to get Russia and North Korea to get rid of their nuclear weapons? It is simple. Canada needs to get involved in the talks, the negotiations, and the drafting of a new international nuclear disarmament convention. We are not going to come up with a solution by staying in our corner doing nothing. The solution involves multilateralism and getting engaged in the process instead of isolating ourselves like we are now. For the Liberal Party the solution entails respecting its vote on a motion in 2010 in this Parliament and respecting its own party and its supporters.

Privilege

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very strong speech, which I completely agree with.

I am one of the officers of the Order of Canada that signed the declaration calling on Canada to join these essential negotiations for the security of the planet.

[*English*]

I just have come back from the United Nations for work on the Ocean Conference. The subject of Canada's absence in these nuclear disarmament talks came up. I was asked by other delegates why Canada was not participating, as under the new Liberal government it had been seen that Canada was back.

We have played a constructive role in the Paris negotiations. The absence of Canada in these talks makes people wonder why. This is a role Canada traditionally had played. Lloyd Axworthy led the negotiations for the landmines treaty, the Ottawa process, for an example. It baffles me that we are not at the table.

Does my hon. colleague have any theories as to why Canada is staying away from these talks?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. I also thank her for signing the letter to the current Prime Minister. I obviously congratulate the Green Party for the efforts it has been making these past few years in the fight for world peace.

First, the Liberal government's response was to hide behind the fissile material cut-off treaty. Working on adopting this treaty is fine. However, the negotiations on banning the production, possession and use of nuclear weapons are not a substitute for the efforts needed to achieve nuclear disarmament.

It also seems as though the Liberal government is hiding behind Canada's membership in NATO, and right now it is giving in to pressure from the United States, which told its NATO allies to oppose the negotiations.

Canada has no reason to follow President Trump on this issue. Canada's membership in NATO does not mean that it must vote only with the nuclear states.

Canada should learn from the Netherlands. They also belong to NATO, but they are taking part in the negotiations.

• (1640)

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thank you for your indulgence. I would like to thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his presentation. He has been very clear as to the government's intentions.

Starting in 1984, and for two decades, I took part in various international forums and multilateral negotiations. This all happened even before my colleague was a teenager. There was a time when Canada was respected and listened to; it used to have some degree of influence with other countries, but no longer.

I find it hard to explain how, on the one hand, we can decline to participate in these negotiations, and, on the other hand, we can be trying to get a seat on the Security Council.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie has 45 seconds or less for his reply.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I will try. I thank my colleague for his question. I find it hard to explain this kind of strategy on the part of the Liberal government, which refuses to participate in good faith in these crucial negotiations even though it intends to seek the support of those same countries to get a seat on the Security Council. It is completely contradictory. Just because an objective is difficult to achieve does not mean we should not have the political will to achieve it.

We have seen Canada play a leadership role in the past, as it has with the Ottawa convention or the creation of the International Criminal Court. It is time for Canada to make a comeback.

[*English*]

If we are back, we should be back for real.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Banff—Airdrie, Taxation; the hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, Health; the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, The Environment.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in today's debate, and I am also pleased to be sharing my time with the hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

Make no mistake. All of us in the House wish that we could live in a world that was free of nuclear weapons. Facing the reality of the Cold War, the former British prime minister, the late Margaret Thatcher, said, "a world without nuclear weapons would be less stable and more dangerous for all of us." She said that during the Cold War.

Is the world today even more unstable than in Margaret Thatcher's era? Today we have jihadi terrorism all around the world. Today we have rogue nations, like Iran, trying hard to build themselves nuclear weapons. There are terrorist groups that want nuclear devices to commit heinous acts of mass murder. It is believed that North Korea has nuclear weapon capability and is working diligently to develop missiles that will deliver a nuclear arsenal. We see every week a new test from North Korea. South Korea is concerned about what is happening in North Korea. The world is concerned about what is happening in North Korea.

Many countries around the world are vulnerable: Israel, South Korea, Ukraine, and many more. However, many nations continue to thrive and survive, because their enemies know that nuclear retaliation would follow an assault on any of these states.

Privilege

During the Cold War, the former Soviet Union was assured that any nuclear assault it committed on the western world would have resulted in a nuclear weapon response from the west, and not necessarily equal to what they sent to the west. Undoubtedly, a larger attack would have been unleashed. This was known as mutually assured destruction, or as many have referred to it, MAD. The MAD doctrine not only worked to deter the initial use of nuclear weapons but was designed to limit the continued use of nuclear weapons, should they ever be used in a conflict.

Dr. Henry Kissinger, the former secretary of state in the Nixon administration, always insists that the United States' nuclear weapon arsenal and the MAD policy has provided the world with more decades of continuous peace than any other time in recorded history. Kissinger maintains that a greater proportion of the world has been engaged in conflict throughout history than we have had since the end of the Second World War. There continue to be conflicts, of course, and in fact there are wars going on right now, yet the longest period of world peace for the greatest proportion of humans has existed since the end of the Second World War and the introduction of nuclear weapon capability. This is the cold reality. It is a peaceful time for the world in this respect, yet the thought of the destructive capability of nuclear weapons is much of what keeps the peace. In fact, it brought an end, some would argue, to World War II.

The motion the NDP has brought forward has six parts. The first part reads:

(a) recognize the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from any use of nuclear weapons, and recognize those consequences transcend national borders and pose grave implications for human survival, the environment, socioeconomic development, the global economy, food security, and for the health of future generations;

The Conservative Party does not disagree with that statement. In fact, we kept that in mind for the last three parliaments we governed.

Second, the NDP motion says that we should:

(b) reaffirm the need to make every effort to ensure that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances;

Well, we have heard a few people use the word “utopian” today. This clause, most believe, is unrealistic, given the reality of nations possessing or trying to acquire nuclear weapons. Iran and North Korea continue to develop their nuclear weapon capacity even today. India and Pakistan achieved the development of nuclear weapon capability. North Korea, Iran, India, and Pakistan have all stated clearly the circumstances under which they would use their nuclear weapons. Therefore, “under any circumstances” in the NDP motion, we believe, is unachievable.

• (1645)

Third, the NDP wants the House to recognize previous motions passed by the House or by the United Nations. The motion reads:

(c) recall the unanimous vote in both Houses of Parliament in 2010 that called on Canada to participate in negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention;

The House is aware of that motion from 2010, yet the current international negotiations, we believe, will not lead to a nuclear weapons convention, because Russia, the United States, and China are not participating. They are not talking the talk.

The NDP also wants the House to:

(e) express disappointment in Canada's vote against, and absence from, initial rounds of negotiations for a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons;

This is where we also disagree with the motion. There is no point in commencing negotiations leading to a convention to prohibit nuclear weapons without including the nations that actually have those nuclear weapons. It is a waste of time, money, and effort.

The final part of the NDP motion asks the House to support the initial draft of the convention prohibiting nuclear weapons. Again, the nations that have nuclear weapons have already made it clear why they have them, and until the threats they live under are eliminated, these nations will keep their weapons. Some of these nations are Canada's allies, and they are, in some cases, protecting Canada as well.

The question is what we can do. It is one thing to say whether we agree or disagree with the Liberal approach, but what can we do?

Our previous Conservative government worked to achieve further decommissioning of the still huge arsenals of nuclear weapons that exist in Russia and the United States. The official opposition recognizes the government's action to contain fissionable material. Meaningful talks continue with our nuclear weapon possessing democratic allies and others in the enduring hope of one day having a nuclear free world.

The coercive exercise the NDP is calling for Canada to participate in is not a good way to work toward a nuclear weapon prohibition. Our Conservative government worked hard over our 10 years as the government to reduce the number of nuclear weapons in the possession of foreign governments and other international actors. We worked to prevent not just nuclear weapons but chemical weapons and biological weapons, weapons of mass destruction. We worked with our allies.

Conservative and Liberal governments have signed treaties and international agreements at the UN and a number of organizations, including NATO, the G8, the International Atomic Energy Agency, and the Conference on Disarmament, to reduce the number of nuclear weapons available in the world. We continue to work toward reducing nuclear proliferation and making sure that fissionable material is not available to rogue states and terrorist organizations to produce nuclear warheads.

The reality is that an all-out prohibition is not on the horizon in the foreseeable future. Supporting the NDP motion is unrealistic, when our NATO allies, western democracies, and other major UN nations that possess nuclear warheads are not participating in these talks. When the main world powers are in agreement, then there can be a prohibition, but we do not have that agreement when it comes to nuclear weapons. We have a situation where China, and Russia in particular, continue to build up their arsenals, not reduce them.

Privilege

As Canadians, we must continue to do what we have in the past. We must always use diplomatic means to assist world powers in the de-escalation of conflict. We must work with our allies and partners in the non-proliferation of nuclear arms to make sure they are effective, safe, and responsibly used. We can work toward a prohibition of nuclear weapons that will be accomplished, we hope, in the future. However, arbitrarily trying to coerce nuclear weapon states into giving up these arms we know does not work.

The NDP is asking Canada to sign up for negotiations that do not include our allies. These negotiations do not include the powers that possess nuclear weapons. There can be no discussion or dialogue when they are not at the table.

We can do things, including the enforcement of a Sergei Magnitsky law. We can have sanctions and global isolation of those state players and individuals that are responsible for the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

• (1650)

There is opportunity to work within the G7, to work through NATO, to work through other forums, and I hope that we continue to do it, whether it be through economic sanctions, travel bans, or engagement with our allies. We can make sure that we are partners with them on the world stage, but if we are to speak, let us make sure the ones who have the weapons are there at the table.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. member's threat assessment would be very similar to my own, which is that the threat of nuclear capability is actually increasing rather than decreasing, whether it is cruise missiles, ICBMs, ballistics, or a whole variety of platforms, whether they are submarine platforms or land-based platforms or whatever, and that only seems to have increased rather than decreased.

The real issue here is whether we can walk and chew gum at the same time, given the reality posed by the threat from North Korea. China does not seem to be able to rein in its client state, and Iran is a clear and present danger to all those in the region, including Israel, where the relationship is an existential threat.

Given his threat assessment, which I would say is similar to my own, and given the necessity and the need to continue to negotiate, would it be his view that the debate and the concerns on the ballistic missile defence need to be addressed realistically?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, indeed, that is the direction we should be going, maybe now more than ever. We see rogue states and terrorist organizations trying to get equipment and material so that they can have a dirty bomb or something that can even be carried in a suitcase. Russia and China—both nuclear powers, both veto-wielding permanent members of the Security Council—are not participating in the nuclear weapon ban talks.

The Russian foreign minister has said that 120 countries are participating in the talks, and are trying to coerce nuclear powers into abandoning nuclear weapons, but as the member asked in his question, is there a greater risk? Yes, and it is not because we see that one of the superpowers is ready to use it, but because we see countries like North Korea with an itchy finger. We see countries like Iran feverishly trying to get not just the technology but the equipment and the material to make a bomb.

Again, the threat is very clear. Whether one is President Trump or former President Obama, all have spoken about an increased threat to this type of war—not even war, but attack. We do not withdraw from everything, but certainly some exercises are very futile in accomplishing much.

• (1655)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot will not be surprised that I disagree. This is not an NDP motion to engage the world in action; this is a United Nations negotiation that is taking place. It is being led by Austria, Ireland, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, and Sweden, countries with whom we have strong relationships, countries with whom we are in strong trading relationships. It is not far-fetched that we start the negotiations and bring others in. I note that Iran is actually in these negotiations. I also note that Canada started out in the lead on land mines and cluster munitions when the countries that used land mines and cluster munitions were not in the room.

While the United Nations negotiate, what possible advantage is there for Canada? As a country, we want to show leadership in the world and not ignore negotiations when there is even a chance that the process of negotiation would bring in those countries that are now, as he said himself, modernizing their nuclear weapons and endangering our entire world.

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government today has determined there is not a lot of benefit to being at those kinds of exercises. I am not certain why the government decided not to be engaged in them. The Liberals went to their convention where they said they were going to be involved in those kinds of exercises, and today they are saying they are not worthwhile.

In preparation for this debate, I went back to 2007 to a meeting that we had with my good friend Doug Roche, a previous Alberta member of Parliament and senator Ernie Regehr from Project Ploughshares. In response to my hon. colleague from Toronto, who spoke prior to the question by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, the concerns they talked about that day seemed in some regard to already have taken place, so the threat is even greater. When the threat becomes greater, we must be vigilant in what we do, but we should not be spending time on things that perhaps may not be effective.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be joining the debate, and speaking to the motion tabled by the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, with whom I have the distinguished pleasure of working on the foreign affairs committee.

To begin, I will go through different subsections of the motion to give some brief commentary and get deeper into it. I also have a lot of Reagan quotes today. I find a lot of the positions taken by the New Democrats today almost make them sound like Reaganites at times. I want to draw to the attention of the House that this is where I will be focusing many of my comments today.

Privilege

The motion says that the House should do some things, and then goes into details, none of which any reasonable person here would disagree with. We all know the consequences and dangers of the use of nuclear weapons, including the humanitarian consequences. There will be no disagreement from me or from others in the House.

Subsection (b) states, “reaffirm the need to make every effort to ensure that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances.” The principle and sentiment behind it is absolutely reasonable, but it is simply unrealistic, especially in an age where there are many more rogue nations that possess nuclear weapons, along with the proliferation of the technology and knowledge, and the ability to track them being very difficult.

Subsection (c) states, “recall the unanimous vote in both Houses of Parliament in 2010 that called on Canada to participate in negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention.” I do not think the motion binds the government today to undertake any talks, or any type of negotiation at the international level. That was seven years ago now. In my case, I was not a member of the House then, and I do not think parliaments are bound by such motions that direct a particular parliament's intent or will.

Subsection (d) states, “reaffirm its support for the 2008 five-point proposal...” It is not that it is pointless, but simply put, we are supporting allies in the NATO military alliance. I have many more comments about NATO's policy document, where it talks about what its nuclear deterrent will and will not do.

Subsection (e) states, “express disappointment in Canada's vote against, and absence from, initial rounds of negotiations for a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons.” I do not agree with that particular subsection. It is not egregious, I just disagree.

Finally, subsection (f) talks about the release on May 22, 2017, of the Draft Convention on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. I disagree with that mostly because of the other subsections leading up to it. I just do not think it would be all that useful.

There is a Yiddish proverb, which states, “The world is big, its troubles still bigger.” Since 1945, we can all agree that the world has faced many troubles. One of the leading ones was nuclear proliferation, and the dangers of an all-out nuclear war between the two superpowers at the time, until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989.

I grew up in Poland. When I was very little, my parents were able to come to Canada and take us away from there. My parents would not talk about it as a point of discussion, but they remembered the drills they would have at school, which they would talk to us about. They would tell us what they had to do in case of a nuclear war.

There were these funny infomercials on Polish television telling people to cover themselves with newspapers in the case of nuclear war. The thinking was that the initial flash would burn the paper, but not skin, and people were somehow supposed to crawl somewhere. Polish people have very macabre, dark humour, and would say that after that moment, people could crawl to the cemetery. Dark humour is very common in Poland. It is still common today among Polish expats, but it gives the feeling that people had about it. This imminent danger that people felt was quite common.

I have a specific point on why some of the subsections in the motion are quite troublesome. NATO, on deterrence and defence, says in its policy document listed on its website, “Collective defence is the Alliance's greatest responsibility and deterrence remains a core element of NATO's overall strategy...” It goes on to list what is being defended: liberty, democracy, human rights, the rule of law. It goes on to state, “NATO's capacity to deter and defend is supported by an appropriate mix of capabilities...” Then it goes on to list them. It concludes, “Nuclear, conventional and missile defence capabilities complement each other.” This is a core part of what NATO provides in its military alliance to all members who participate in it. Through article 5, Canada ensures our own sovereignty and national protection, but also that of our allies.

● (1700)

Although Canada is not in possession of nuclear weapons, our allies are. It forms what I would call a complete package of protection. That is what NATO says here. It continues, “NATO also maintains the freedom of action and flexibility to respond to the full spectrum of challenges with an appropriate and tailored approach, at the minimum level of force.”

As always, western powers, western countries, liberal democracies have never been the ones to threaten nuclear war. We have never been the ones to say that this should be the first line, that it should always be used as the first response to all types of aggression. It is always “use minimum level of force required”.

Many countries, if not most or all NATO countries, see nuclear weapons the way the population does, which is absolute last resort, preferring that under no circumstances should they be used.

In the British House of Commons, on January 2015, the secretary of state for defence, Michael Fallon, said, “It is Faslane that is truly Britain's peace camp. Whether we like it or not, there remain approximately 17,000 nuclear weapons globally. We cannot uninvent those weapons.”

I think it speaks to the reality we live in today. The simple fact is that these weapons were invented, produced, manufactured, deployed, and now they sit as part of the nuclear deterrence that many countries use. This is not to say that the sentiment behind the motion is not appropriate. It is not to say that the principle, the thought, the idea is not something shared by many members of the House, and hopefully all members of the House.

I did say at the beginning of my intervention that I would be bringing up a lot of Reagan quotes, because Reagan was a nuclear abolitionist. I see members on the opposite side starting to smile.

Privilege

On November 17, 1982, Reagan said, in an address to the nation on strategic arms reduction and nuclear deterrence, "I intend to search for peace along two parallel paths: deterrence and arms reductions." He goes on to say, "I believe these are the only paths that offer any real hope for an enduring peace."

Reagan's example, thoughts, and his active participation in attempting to abolish nuclear weapons through different means is an example. The motion actually speaks to that sentiment as well. Again, when I read it, I immediately thought of Reagan's activism.

In 1984, in an interview, he expressed the following sentiment, "I just happen to believe that we cannot go into another generation with the world living under the threat of those weapons and knowing that some madman can push the button some place." It goes on. Again, he expresses the sentiment, the principle that New Democrats have encapsulated in their wording with some problematic kind of "what would we do with that" sentiment and "how do we make that a reality", and then not really addressing today's reality.

Reagan was a nuclear abolitionist, but he was also a clear-eyed realist who accepted that the world was as it was. He was an unapologetic supporter of the strategic defence initiative, also known as Star Wars, and he went as far as he could. With his partner, the Soviet Union, he did what was possible.

I will just mention another idea from Reagan. With these considerations firmly in mind, he said, "I call upon the scientific community in our country, those who gave us nuclear weapons, to turn their great talents now to the cause of mankind and world peace: to give us the means of rendering these nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete." Again, the same type of principle, the same type of sentiment behind the motion. He just believed that the reality we lived in required us to act upon it.

On some of the sections that we have in this motion, where it talks about an agreement and talking at the United Nations, Reagan said in his 1982 UN address on disarmament, "Agreements on arms control and disarmament can be useful in reinforcing peace, but they're not magic." Therefore, we should not confuse talking at UN cocktail dinners or the signing of agreements with solving and resolving problems.

The paper castle suggested by talk shops the world over are blown away, typically by lax enforcement and aggressive rogue regimes.

Reagan never abandoned what some authors have termed his hatred of nuclear weapons and his desire to eliminate them. If we look at Reagan from his first term to his second term, he was a strong abolitionist from the beginning, and he made it reality in the only way he knew how. It was not eliminating completely, but he did what he could with the Soviet Union, with the powers that were available to him, leading to arms reduction.

Today, though, we do not have such a situation. Proliferation is far beyond that, to countries that simply do not want to negotiate. I do not believe we should implement parts of this motion, that we should believe talk shops are enough. Aggressive enforcement of current treaties and NGOs are the way to do this. I do not think the motion achieves many of the sentiments and principles behind it.

● (1705)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member a question based on what the previous speaker said. The member brought up the name of Doug Roche, a former Conservative senator and a former Canadian ambassador for disarmament. The previous speaker implied, I think, that Mr. Roche agreed with his view on the world situation and that these talks were useless.

However, with respect to this, Doug Roche said that the current government was showing irresponsible leadership for skipping the nuclear ban negotiations at the UN. Could the member comment on that?

● (1710)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I cannot comment on what Mr. Roche has or has not said in comparison to what the previous member had alluded to because I am not familiar with the commentary.

I will bring it back to Reagan. I know for the New Democrats that is sometimes a difficult comparison to make, but the principles behind the sentiment of the motion was shared by President Ronald Reagan. He actually worked actively on nuclear abolition.

This is a quote that I did not include in my remarks. In his 1984 state of the union address, Reagan admitted that, "The only value in our two nations possessing nuclear weapons is to make sure they will never be used." It is valuable to the discussion to remember that different political leaders have expressed the right sentiment, the right belief, yet they have different ways of going about the process toward that achievement.

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize my colleague's participation at the foreign affairs committee, where we spend a lot of time together. He is thoughtful, as well as a pragmatist, which is what I want to discuss here today, pragmatism with respect to dealing with these issues.

Participating in an agreement that brings none of the holders of nuclear weapons to the table requires a pragmatic approach. Our government is taking the lead in bringing 159 countries toward a UN resolution for a fissile material cut-off treaty. Do you not feel this approach will require pragmatism, working with the countries that are involved in holding nuclear weapons and showing leadership in the international community, with the hope of one day bringing this under control?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to remind hon. members to address their questions through the Chair.

The hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

Privilege

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, with any type of agreement, we would hope the parties that are the most affected by it would be the ones leading the charge to make it happen, such as with international treaties with respect to water or migratory birds, or any of the other many issues that have transnational implications that go across international boundaries. Countries most implicated in either the pollution or water problems, and the same for the possession of nuclear weapons used as a deterrent, have to lead the charge.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, the reason the different START agreements and the arms reduction talks were so successful between President Reagan and Gorbachev was because they were the two primary powers involved. It has to start with those most affected by it. They have to be leading it. This cannot simply go down to a talk shop, like Reagan warned us in 1982 in his UN address. It is not magic, but it does take hard work.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time, if there is any left, with the member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Yesterday, I listened to Setsuko Thurlow, a Hiroshima survivor, speak eloquently of what it was like to have her family, her neighbourhood, and her city vaporized in an instant of mass destruction. I wish everyone in the House could have heard her very moving words.

Setsuko has devoted her life to advocating for nuclear disarmament to ensure that her experience will never be repeated. She also reminded us of Canada's role in the bomb that destroyed her city. The uranium was mined at Great Bear Lake and refined at Port Hope, Ontario.

When I was young, the names Hiroshima and Nagasaki were relatively recent reminders of the horrors of nuclear warfare. In the climate of fear in the depths of the Cold War, people worked hard for nuclear disarmament and hoped against hope that this could never happen again. Ironically, 60 years after Hiroshima, we are closer now to nuclear warfare than we were when I was growing up in the late 1950s and 1960s.

Like many kids in that era, I grew up with school air raid drills that taught us what to do if an atomic bomb was dropped on our town. Penticton, British Columbia had a population of 10,000 at that time. I am not sure why we thought we were a target, but like schools across Canada, North America, and likely much of the world, our town had an air raid siren and practised our air raid drills. There was, I admit, a U.S. air force base not too far south of us. I remember that feeling of vague dread whenever I saw a B-52 flying overhead en route to airspace over northern Canada and Alaska. There were B-52s overheard every day, every one of them laden with nuclear warheads.

Some would say that it was that threat of mutually assured destruction that kept worldwide conflict at bay through the Cold War, but the risk to the planet was, and remains, incalculable. We came so close to nuclear disaster many times, not just during the Cuban missile crisis but other events brought on by sheer accident, human error, and human folly.

Therefore, we would think that the world would have come to its senses over the past 60 years since Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

However, even now, 25 years after the end of the Cold War, there are more than 15,000 nuclear warheads in the world.

Canadians have long recognized the threat of nuclear proliferation and have long called for nuclear disarmament. In 2010, the House of Commons unanimously passed a motion that called on the government to, among other things, address the progress of and an opportunity for nuclear disarmament; endorse the 2008 plan for nuclear disarmament of Ban Ki-moon, then Secretary General of the United Nations; and deploy a major diplomatic initiative to increase the rate of nuclear disarmament. The Liberal Party of Canada just last year adopted a resolution at its Winnipeg policy convention that urged its Liberal government to comply more fully, both with its international treaty obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and play a proactive role in achieving a nuclear weapons free world and emulate the Ottawa process, which led to the banning of landmines, by convening an international conference to commence negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention that would ban nuclear weapons. However, the government's actions in the past year go completely against that resolution.

I would like to back up and talk briefly about the Ottawa process, in which Canada truly led the world to a ban on landmines. This was Canada at its best on the world stage. It was difficult work, but it was the right thing to do. I am proud Canada did the heavy lifting. It was done without the main players on the stage. The United States was not there, yet we went ahead because it was the right thing to do. We need to do the same thing with nuclear disarmament.

The international community, involving over 130 countries, is currently carrying out negotiations on the convention on the prohibition of nuclear weapons, just as the Liberal Party resolution asked for. The problem is that not only is Canada not leading this process, but it is boycotting it completely. Canada is not back on the international scene. It is backing away from its traditional leadership role in promoting a more peaceful world and backing away under pressure from the United States and other nuclear powers.

● (1715)

It is ironic that we are debating this point only two days after the government proudly rolled out a shiny new foreign policy that tried to paint Canada as taking a path independent from the United States, when in this process we are meekly following the Trump administration.

The Netherlands is the only NATO country standing up for sanity and taking a strong role in the negotiations. These negotiations for nuclear disarmament are still going on at the United Nations, and Canada could join the process and take a real role in this important and essential project.

Privilege

Instead, the government hides behind its actions on the fissile material cut-off treaty. If successful, this effort would stop the production of plutonium and highly enriched uranium, the basic elements of nuclear weapons. While this is a laudable goal, it will do absolutely nothing to bring about nuclear disarmament. It is not nuclear disarmament at all.

As I said at the start, there are more than 15,000 nuclear warheads in the world, and the nuclear powers have huge stockpiles of fissile materials. They do not need any more plutonium or highly enriched uranium to keep building, for years to come, more weapons that could incinerate the world several times over. The fissile material cut-off treaty will not stop that.

Canada is in a unique position to be a leader in nuclear disarmament. I want to point out that my riding has a long history of peace activism focused by the strong Doukhobor community with its dedication to peace and toil, and the Mir Centre for Peace at Selkirk College in Castlegar.

My predecessor in this place, Alex Atamenenko, tabled a motion asking the government to create a department of peace, and I have tabled that same motion here in this Parliament. This would create a minister responsible for promoting the non-violent resolution of conflicts at home and abroad. It would speak volumes to the high priority that Canadians place on a peaceful world.

Opponents to negotiating a nuclear ban treaty say that disarmament must happen step by step and that the time is not right for these negotiations. The world is not secure enough for the treaty. We have reached the edge of this cliff step by step over the last 60 years. The world will never be fully secure. We cannot wait for better conditions. We cannot afford to wait at all.

Yes, the nuclear powers will always oppose nuclear disarmament, but we must not bow to their wishes and blindly take their viewpoint. We need to radically change the world view of the nuclear powers. It will not be easy and it will not happen overnight, but we must be bold, live up to our convictions and our moral duty, and work tirelessly for a nuclear weapons free world.

• (1720)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as is often the case, I find myself stuck between the fissile motion of the NDP and the facile position of the Conservatives. The last time the Conservatives ran a fighter procurement program, we largely lost our aviation industry, which took a long time to recover and we ended up with the Bomarc missile, which made us a temporary and not very effective nuclear power. I find it very consistent with the position we are hearing today, that nuclear weapons are essential for world peace, which is a position I do not necessarily agree with.

I am wondering what my colleague in the NDP thinks of that position and if he thinks the obvious logical conclusion we are hearing from the Conservatives is that, if every country had nuclear weapons, there would be world peace.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, I must admit it is one of the statements from the Liberals that I can almost agree with today. I have heard all day both from the Liberals and the Conservatives how we cannot start nuclear disarmament treaty negotiations because

there are more and more nuclear weapons in the world every day, and more and more countries have them. We cannot start a negotiation under that situation. If we do not start it under that situation, when are we going to start it? It is not going to happen on its own.

We are not going to have the nuclear powers at the table perhaps at the start, but we can talk among the countries in the world that are concerned. There are 130 of them talking right now. We could join them and help lead that and start a process that would work toward nuclear disarmament. I do not think the world is a safer place when there are more nuclear weapons. We have 15,000 of them now, so let us get back to the table and start working toward a nuclear free world.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure we all agree that perhaps one of the most frightening threats that we have in the world is the proliferation of weapons technology, of delivery systems, and of fissile material, particularly to rogue states.

Would the member care to comment on what the government is doing, or what it ought to be doing, to assist in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, I agree that we should be working toward reducing nuclear proliferation as well as working toward nuclear disarmament. They are two somewhat different things. We do not have to stop one to do the other.

The government has been talking about its fissile treaty that it is leading. That is a laudable action, but it is not the same as nuclear disarmament. The world's nuclear powers are at the table probably because they would love to stop the production of fissile material because they have enough for years to come, and they want to be the only kids on the block with that.

They are two different things and both are laudable, but one is much more important, and that is the work toward world disarmament.

• (1725)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, earlier in the debate the member for Calgary Shepard described what Ronald Reagan had done as though he was happy with incremental work to remove nuclear weapons from the world.

I had the honour of working with Mikhail Gorbachev. He related a personal story to me of the moment he got frustrated with the pace of negotiations. He picked up the phone and told his staff, "I want to call the president of the United States." Ronald Reagan personally took his call. Mikhail Gorbachev asked him, "Mr. President, do you want to get rid of nuclear weapons? I do." Ronald Reagan replied, "Yes, I do." Gorbachev said, "I'm afraid all our negotiators are going to do is drink vodka forever and just talk, but we need to do this." They intended to do it.

Private Members' Business

The world's political leadership have dropped the ball. It is time for us to pick it up.

The speech given by the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay said what I am about to ask him, but I would like him to reiterate. Why on earth is Canada not at the table with nations like the Netherlands, a NATO ally, working to raise the political momentum towards getting rid of nuclear weapons?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for that comment, because I totally agree. We cannot get anywhere if we are not talking. The Prime Minister said the other day that he thinks these negotiations are “useless”. They are becoming more useless to Canada because we are being written off the world stage as a real player in negotiations around the diplomacy of getting rid of these weapons.

Canada has to be at the talks. We have to be working. We have to lead as much as we can. The major players will come to the table when they see the rest of the world working on this. They are all human beings, as we are. As the member said, they probably want to get rid of these weapons as well. We have to create that space, the climate to make that happen.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no more stark illustration, I think, of the folly of humankind than the fact that we have created and housed here on earth an arsenal capable of destroying the planet many times over. I do think that, if we want to safeguard the future of the planet, we need to get smart and start working toward disarming ourselves when it comes to our nuclear arsenal, and Canada should be a leader in that effort. Canada has been a leader in that effort in the past. In fact, the Liberal Party of Canada has been a leader on that file in the past. It is disappointing to see a government say it is bringing back traditional Canadian foreign policy but leave out a really vital component of Canadian foreign policy, which is to work toward nuclear disarmament.

The only other threat to the planet on that scale that we see right now is climate change. However, climate change does not have the same kind of stark and immediate catastrophic consequences that we would have if we were to deploy the world's nuclear arsenal.

Canada should be at the table. We have heard a lot in the House today, and we heard yesterday what I thought was a genuinely shocking comment from the Prime Minister that Canada going out in the world, providing leadership, and trying to rally people around the cause of nuclear disarmament was useless. I was frankly shocked that was the word he would use to describe a kind of diplomacy that Canadian governments, Liberal governments, of the past have used, whether it was on the international landmines treaty or the International Criminal Court. All great diplomatic efforts start with some kind of opposition.

Yes, it is a challenge that the major players, when it comes to our nuclear arsenal, are not at the table. However, that does not mean it is useless or meaningless to rally other countries around the world to tell those holders of nuclear arsenals that we want a world where we do not live under the threat of a nuclear holocaust.

Presumably, when the Liberals say they are proud of pursuing their fissile material cut-off treaty and they try to make it seem as if somehow we could not do that in tandem with pursuing a nuclear

disarmament treaty, it is because someone is telling them that they will not get the one if they support the other. Presumably, it is the United States telling them that, if they want to make progress on the one, they cannot on the other. That, to me, says that Canada's position does matter, because the United States would not care to try to get us off the scent of pursuing a nuclear disarmament treaty unless it thought that Canada's leadership mattered. That is proof positive, I think, that the Liberals are failing Canadians who want to see a nuclear free world, and they are failing the planet.

• (1730)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:30 p.m., pursuant to an order made Tuesday, May 30, 2017, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings.

Further, pursuant to an order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Monday, June 12, 2017, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business, as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

EXCISE TAX ACT

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC) moved that Bill C-342, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (carbon levy), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is truly a great honour to have the privilege to introduce a private member's bill.

One of the first things that happens in Parliament is that we elect our Speaker. The second thing is that every member's name is drawn from a hat. I was given the great privilege of being number 70 drawn out, and here we are, almost two years into this Parliament, and my turn came up to introduce a bill.

There is a lot of thought that goes into what the important issue is that needs to be addressed in a private member's bill. In the last Parliament, I was very happy that I was able to introduce the “safe at home” bill, which required a safe distance between a victim of sexual assault and the offender. During the warrant period of sentencing, there has to be a separation to protect both physical and psychological health. This passed, which made me very happy. However, here we are in the current Parliament and I am again honoured to have a private member's bill. What should it be? I truly wanted to represent the community that I love, Langley—Aldergrove, which is one of the most beautiful parts of Canada and the world.

Private Members' Business

One day, I was checking out my energy heating bill. I am quite excited that the Conservative position always has been and in reality is the only party to stand up for the Canadian taxpayer. Traditionally, both the Liberals and the NDP have supported tax increases whenever possible. I hope that is not the case now, but one expects an action based on past performance, so I would expect the Liberals to support more and more taxes.

Canadians, as the Prime Minister has said, are willing to pay their fair share. Canadians are very fair. However, when I looked at my energy heating bill for heating my home, and I live in Langley, British Columbia, there is the carbon tax. There is a line that shows the cost of the natural gas, then other charges, the carbon tax, and two lines below that there is the GST. Suddenly, I realized that the government is collecting a tax on a tax.

There are diverse opinions on whether or not we should have a carbon tax. The government is supporting the greenhouse reduction targets, which are part of the targets of the Paris accord, and it is one of the reasons why this side supported it. Those were our targets and the Liberal government has used those targets in the Paris accord, but how do we achieve those targets? Some would like to see energy efficiency through regulation.

My colleague for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa has a long successful history in protecting the environment. I want to thank him for the great work that he has done. I have been honoured to work with him on the environment committee. However, he is a Conservative member of Parliament who does not believe that the government should be taking every opportunity to tax Canadians. Here is an example of where the Liberals have that right to come up with their policies, and they are going to put a price on carbon. This is how the Liberals believe they can reach those targets. We do not believe that will be successful, but that is their right and that is their policy.

However, when the Prime Minister announced putting a price on carbon, he said, for that price on carbon, it would be up to the provinces as to what they would do with those revenues. The Prime Minister promised Canadians that it would be federally revenue neutral. Yes, each province would determine how they would collect that price on carbon, but federally it would have zero effect on the revenues to the federal government. This was a promise. There are a lot of promises and a lot of statements made by the Liberal government here in the House and to Canadians. Be it in the House or out publicly at town hall meetings, there was promise after promise that it was federally revenue neutral, but that is not true.

• (1735)

I saw it on my bill, and I started talking to constituents, asking them to check their bills. For everyone who checked their bill, sure enough, the government was charging GST on the tax. That is a tax on a tax.

Time and time again, Canadians were shocked. They had believed the Prime Minister. They had trusted him. He had said, like Yoda trying to play the Jedi mind tricks, “High taxes, they are good for you”. Canadians were believing it until they saw the truth. What the Prime Minister was saying was from the dark side. It was not the truth. The truth is now being revealed, and Canadians are realizing they have been deceived.

We also called on the Library of Parliament and asked it to do a study and tell us if this is just a little money, because the Prime Minister has continually said this is a small cost and that we would go into a deficit of \$10 billion, that it is just a little to build a strong Canada. We did the research with the Library of Parliament, and we are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars coming out of B.C. and Alberta every year. As the price of carbon goes up, so does the GST.

There must then be evidence in the budget the Liberals introduced that there are additional revenues on that line for GST. There it was. The Library of Parliament indicated hundreds of millions of tax dollars coming out of Canadians' pockets.

The Liberals believe in high taxation and lots of social programs, but as a Conservative, we are the only party in the House representing the Canadian taxpayer and saying we trust that money in the pockets and in the bank accounts of Canadians. They will use their money wisely. The Liberals on the other hand say taxes are good, this is fair, and it will be revenue neutral. That is all not true. We know from the report from the Library of Parliament it is not true, and we also now see it in their budget. There it is. It is a little hidden, but if we dig, there it is. There is a massive increase in revenues for the federal government. It is not revenue neutral.

What do we do? Being good Conservatives, representing Canadian taxpayers and low taxes, we told the truth and presented that document from the Library of Parliament in the House and asked for unanimous consent that it be tabled. Sadly, we did not receive unanimous consent. The Liberal Party did not want that made public. However, it is a public document, so we released it to the media and the Canadian media put it out there. Canadians can now see it by looking at their energy bill.

How is this going to affect Canadians? As I said, the report indicates hundreds of millions of dollars being taken out of Alberta and British Columbia. As the price of carbon expands across the country, we are talking about billions of dollars.

If we think back to the party that represented the Canadian taxpayer. The Conservative Party of Canada, in 2006, promised we were going to lower the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%. We all remember that. One of the things I really respect, and a reason I am so pleased to be a Conservative, is that Conservatives keep their promises. If they say they are going to lower the GST down to 5%, it will happen.

Private Members' Business

A lot of times, our promises are delivered even before Canadians expect it. That is what happened. We could see the economic clouds on the horizon, and instead of lowering it from 7% to 6% to 5% over a gradual phase, it was done almost overnight from 7% down to 5%. Why the GST? The Conservative government provided the lowest taxation in Canadian history, whether it was income tax or lowering taxes for corporations and small business.

● (1740)

That was one of the promises that was made by this party, that if we had formed government, we would have lowered small business taxes. The Liberal Party made the same promise, and of course that is another broken promise. The Liberals have refused to lower taxes.

What is the advantage of low taxes to small business? It helps businesses create jobs. We are competing provincially and locally, but also internationally. For Canada to remain competitive and for small businesses to be able to expand their distribution and create jobs, lowering taxes creates a much healthier economy. However, the Liberal government made that promise, and it is another broken promise.

The former Conservative government lowered the GST. It is the tax, the one tax that affects everyone, and it benefited those living on fixed incomes and in poverty more than any other tax, but particularly those on fixed incomes who have difficulties in choosing between buying medicine, heating their homes, what they are going to have for supper, or how they are going to get around. We provided a bus credit, so that transit costs would be lower. Unfortunately, that is another thing that the Liberal government took away from our Canadian seniors.

The Liberals are deceptively moving the GST from 5% to 7% and higher. As the price of carbon goes up so does the GST. Again, billions of dollars are deceptively being taken out of Canadian taxpayers' pockets.

I have not yet met one Canadian in my riding who thinks it is fair to charge a tax on a tax. Canadians, as the Prime Minister has said, are fair. However, it is not fair to quietly, deceptively charge a tax on a tax. A goods and services tax, GST, is a tax on goods and services. Is a tax a good? No. Is it services? No. It is a tax. Maybe the government, if it is going to continue on taxing taxes, needs to rename what it is doing.

What are Canadians saying? As I said, none of my constituents think it is fair. I have not met one Canadian yet who thinks it is fair to charge a tax on a tax, in principle, except for some of my Liberal colleagues, and unfortunately, some of the other colleagues in the House. I do not want to prejudge what they are going to do, but it is fundamentally unfair.

What Bill C-342 does is, and it is very simple, it makes an amendment to the Excise Tax Act of Canada so that the price of carbon is GST exempt. There are a number of items under the GST legislation, the excise tax legislation, that are exempt. One of those should be tax. A government should not charge a tax on tax, especially when it promised that it would be revenue neutral.

It is only a Liberal government, supported by members of Parliament who think it is okay to charge tax on tax, that would oppose this. I hope I am wrong. I am prejudging from what I have

heard. I am thinking of all the times the Liberals have said that providing marijuana to our children will be good for them. They have said that it is revenue neutral and higher taxes are good for us.

It is like Jedi mind control. I am thinking of a quote from Yoda, "Powerful you have become...the dark side I sense in you." I sense that high taxes and deception are coming from the dark side.

I am proud to stand up in a party that believes in low taxes and standing up for the Canadian taxpayer. I encourage everyone to support this very important bill. Let us make the change. Let us be fair to Canadians.

● (1745)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his investment in this particular initiative, and for taking the time and thought to put this forward.

However, I do want to draw to the House's attention a couple of the comments he made. The member did talk about the lowering of GST from 7% to 6% to 5%, and yes, that did happen, but what you indirectly did at the time, when you were the government, is that you stopped funding and assisting municipalities. You did. I was the mayor of Kingston at the time, and we received a lot less money for very important projects during that time.

What that did is that forced municipalities to increase their taxes. Indirectly, you did not really help the situation; you just made it worse.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the member should be addressing his comments to the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: I did note that the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands was speaking in the second person mode, and it is for that reason that we ask members to speak in the third person and direct their comments to the Chair.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, you are absolutely correct, and I thank my colleague for pointing that out.

At the end of the day, municipalities ended up paying citizens through a tax that is not based on one's income, a non-progressive tax, and ended up paying more. The property taxes of seniors who lived in houses increased, and it ended up costing more for municipalities to provide those basic needs. The whole point to the price on carbon is to set a price to drive industry to find new ways to lower carbon emissions. Would it not lend to that argument that if the price of carbon was lowered, the GST portion would also be lowered? In other words, if there were no price on carbon, there would be no GST.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, the member is missing the point. The point is it is fundamentally unfair to charge a tax on a tax. The member is trying to rewrite history. I was also a member of council for 14 years before coming here for 13 years federally. It was the Chrétien Liberal government during that time, with Paul Martin as finance minister. Traditionally, it is one-third, one-third, one-third. For all of the infrastructure work, it is one-third, one-third, one-third. That all disappeared under the Chrétien Liberal government, with Paul Martin as finance minister. That is when it all changed and became extremely difficult, but it was under the former Stephen Harper Conservative government that there was a balanced budget and the largest infrastructure investment in municipalities in Canadian history. All of the improvements to Canadian infrastructure were made fairly, across every municipality, and not just favourite Liberal municipalities.

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and for his bill currently before the House. I do not doubt his intentions, but I am particularly concerned about the inequity this may cause among consumers in Canada's various regions.

Whenever my colleague has spoken, he has talked mainly about Alberta and British Columbia. I understand why he has considered only those two provinces, since this bill will not apply in those provinces that have carbon exchanges. That is why I am concerned about consumer fairness.

What does the member think about the fact that consumers in Quebec will not be treated the same way as consumers in British Columbia under this proposal? Can he address the question with a view to the fact that carbon pricing systems may vary from one province to another?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, the best way to deal with that is to send Bill C-342 to committee to make sure it can be applied fairly so that all provinces benefit equally. The only way that can be ensured is if it goes to committee and is studied and, if necessary, amended. I am open to amendments. It is up to each province, including Quebec and British Columbia. Each province can determine how it puts the price on carbon.

My bill is to ensure, in the spirit of fairness, that Canadians are not paying tax on a tax. I hope the member will not oppose fairness and will support a low-tax scheme for Canadians. The people it will help the most are those on fixed incomes. A lot of Canadians can afford to pay taxes, but a lot of Canadians are really struggling. He knows that, and I am hoping the Liberals will support this bill going to committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to the bill proposed by the member for Langley—Aldergrove.

Bill C-342 proposes to amend the Excise Tax Act to provide that any tax on carbon pollution that is imposed by a province be

excluded from the total purchase price, and consequently that it excluded from the calculation of the goods and services tax or the harmonized sales tax, the GST/HST.

Although the hon. member has good intentions, the bill presented would unnecessarily complicate our tax system without providing any significant benefits for taxpayers.

The Government of Canada wants our tax system to be as fair and as effective as possible. If we want strong and sustainable economic growth that benefits Canadians as a whole, we must have in place a tax system that is fair for everyone, especially for the middle class, which is central to our economy.

Before taking time to explain the steps and measures that the government has taken in this regard, I would like to explore the consequences of Bill C-342 as proposed by the member.

The GST and HST have always been intended as a tax on consumption. Applying that tax to a broad range of goods and services not only makes it equitable, but also gives it the additional advantage of being simpler to manage and more effective, which is undeniably of benefit to Canadian businesses and consumers.

This is how the GST and HST work: they are calculated on the final sale price of numerous goods and services that Canadians consume or use every day. I am sure that as consumers we are all subject to the tax. That final amount, to which the GST is applied, includes the other taxes, expenses and levies that may have been incorporated into the final price, such as customs duties, the tobacco tax, and other gasoline taxes.

The main advantage of this long-standing general approach is that it is simple and predictable, and that is good for Canadian consumers. It also means that it is easy to calculate for companies that do business in Canada and that it is easy for them to comply with it.

This bill would eliminate those advantages, but without offering any clear benefits in exchange.

The government believes that changes to tax laws are ideally considered to be part of the budget process, to ensure that they are consistent with the financial framework and the general uniformity of the tax system.

Making the tax system fairer and more effective is certainly an important objective of the current government. That is why, last year, we launched a broad review of tax expenditures. The objective of that review is to eliminate tax measures that are poorly targeted or ineffective. The review will also enable the government to identify cases where it would be possible to eliminate measures that unfairly benefit the wealthiest Canadians.

Budget 2017 brings in the first measures intended to implement the changes that came out of the review of tax expenditures conducted by the government. That review identified opportunities for making existing tax measures more effective, fairer, and more accessible to Canadians.

Private Members' Business

In this regard, budget 2017 provided for measures to improve the tax relief offered to family caregivers, students, and persons with disabilities. Tax fairness is a complex objective that calls for ongoing engagement on several fronts. As the government's work in this area progresses, it will continue to aim for a fair tax system that benefits the middle class and those who are working hard to join it.

• (1755)

[English]

As our Minister of Environment and Climate Change has stated clearly before, pollution is not free. A successful climate change strategy puts a price on pollution, enabling Canadians to make choices about their consumption habits to ensure these choices do not come at the expense of our environment. Separating the carbon tax from the total purchase price would instantly make tax compliance more complicated.

A central component of the government's pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change is the increase of nearly \$2,300 in tax-free child benefits this year. We have also taken steps outside the area of taxation to help Canadians keep more of their hard-earned money and plan for the future.

A year ago, the government acted to help people retire with dignity by strengthening the Canada pension plan, reaching a historic agreement with the provinces that will increase the maximum benefit by about 50% over time.

These are real, significant actions that decisively and definitely impact the lives of Canadians.

Add to that the government's historic investment through our previous two budgets and last year's fall economic statement. These investments will help communities become cleaner and less reliant on sources of energy that pollute the air, harm the environment, and compromise our health and the future of our children.

We continue to work toward executing a single, cohesive, and comprehensive plan to improve the lives of middle-class Canadians, a plan that will achieve more than an ad hoc approach like the one proposed in this bill. Commitment to pricing carbon pollution across the country by 2018, which is in line with the federal benchmark, is based on a very basic principle of fairness: people or their proxy must pay for what they use.

When it comes to implementation, provinces that have not already done so have two broad choices. The first is an explicit price-based system. It might be a carbon tax like the one in British Columbia or a hybrid approach composed of a carbon levy and an output-based pricing system, such as the one that is in place in Alberta today. The other possibility is a cap and trade system such as the one here in Ontario and in Quebec.

The final reason the bill falls short of its intent simply comes down to dollars and cents. When we take a closer look at the savings this proposed legislation might achieve, we find that the impact of removing GST/HST on carbon taxes or levies would be relatively negligible for most fuels and would have little impact on purchasers.

For example, removing the 5% GST on the current 6.67¢ per litre carbon tax on gasoline sold in British Columbia would reduce the price per litre of gasoline by about three-tenths of a cent. On a 50-

litre fill-up, the amount of relief would be only 15¢. In Alberta, removing the 5% GST on the estimated cost of \$205 for the carbon levy on natural gas in 2018 for a couple with two children would result in savings of about 85¢ per month, or \$10.25 in that year.

Let us contrast that with the meaningful tax cut that the government introduced shortly after taking office in 2015. Through the middle-class tax cut, nearly nine million Canadians saw a drop in their personal income taxes. Single individuals who benefit are saving an average of \$330 each year, and couples who benefit are saving an average of \$540 each year.

With the introduction of the Canada child benefit plan, which has been in effect since July 2016, nine out of 10 Canadian families with children will receive an average tax cut that is extremely significant.

The bill before us today proposes a tax treatment that is inefficient and fails to support our environmental objectives and priorities. We are proposing to move forward in a clear and cohesive way in co-operation with provinces and municipalities while making sure the middle class and those trying hard to join it are properly protected through a fair and equitable tax system.

For these reasons, the government opposes this legislation.

• (1800)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to my colleague's bill, Bill C-342. He is certainly well-intentioned, as he demonstrated in his speech. However, when we take a closer look at the bill's technical details and its application across the country, not just in Alberta and British Columbia, the provinces he always mentions, there are a number of problems with it. As a parliamentarian, it troubles me to be asked to support such a bill.

I will first discuss the problems with this bill, which are why I am personally opposed to it. The fight against climate change is certainly my first priority, as a certain Liberal minister likes to say, and I hope it is also a priority for the Liberal government and all parties in the House. This issue affects my generation and future generations, so we need to take it very seriously. I am therefore happy to talk about it.

This issue relates to the bill, since it deals with carbon pricing and the polluter pays principle. There must be a price put on consuming polluting products and activities, since pollution comes with a cost. There needs to be a cost to the environmental footprint of using or buying goods and services that pollute more, so that governments can offset our pollution by investing in a greener and more environmentally friendly economy.

I wanted to demonstrate just how important this issue is to me and my party, the NDP. I am sure that I speak for my colleagues when I say that the fight against climate change is very important.

Private Members' Business

Let us talk a little more about the details of the bill now. Although it is short, consisting of only one paragraph, when we look more closely at it we see that it could be difficult to apply. Each province may decide to put a price on carbon in its own way. For example, Quebec and Ontario have created a common carbon exchange. That is one way of putting a price on carbon and pollution. On the other hand, my colleague has often spoken about Alberta and British Columbia, which have chosen another way of pricing carbon and pollution.

Under the plan announced by the federal government, by 2018 all provinces must have a method of pricing carbon and pollution. Since each province is free to choose how to do that, this bill, which proposes an exemption from the 5% goods and services tax, will have the effect of deducting the carbon tax from the GST. However, if we consider how this bill would be applied in each province, we quickly realize that it would not apply where there is a carbon exchange or some other carbon pricing or carbon levy system. We therefore cannot be sure that the member's good intentions would materialize in those provinces.

● (1805)

My colleague often refers to electricity or energy bills to support his arguments and his bill. In fact, however, it would apply to much more than energy bills, if we take the example of Alberta and British Columbia. The GST is paid on a range of goods and services, not just energy. It is important to make the distinction.

My colleague said just now that applying the bill could be complicated. The example he gives regarding energy would be relatively complex. However, in other situations and for other kinds of products, it would be a complex matter to determine what portion the carbon price represented, and then exempt only that portion of the product from the 5% GST. The increased complexity involved in applying the Excise Act could cause a number of problems to its implementation in a province where someone decides to make a trade on a carbon exchange and where pollution rights may be purchased.

For example, a company may buy pollution rights and trade them. This is a cap-and-trade system. At that point, it becomes even more difficult to exempt that carbon price, when it is applied in a carbon exchange where businesses have something a little more intangible, namely a right to pollute.

However, that will not necessarily appear on consumers' bills. Consumers may be involved in the production of a good, since we might say that part of the production is connected with pollution, and thus also connected with carbon. However, it becomes complex to administer and to truly separate out the price connected with carbon in the price of a product, and then try to exempt it from the GST.

With respect to the simplicity of our tax system, I do not think the measure makes it a lot simpler, because it is quite complicated itself.

There is also the entire question of the polluter pays principle. I am not opposed to that principle. The Conservatives want to talk about the GST on the price of carbon, but I think behind that is an effort to defeat the carbon pricing plan.

In fact, we often hear the Conservatives flatly opposing everything associated with the polluter pays principle. That is

unfortunate, but it is probably what is hidden behind the intentions of the member who is proposing this measure.

When the member talks about fairness, I would like to tell him about an interesting situation that parliamentarians could consider as the debate continues, namely a way to achieve the objective.

When a carbon tax was introduced in Alberta, they also introduced a rebate system to reimburse the consumers hardest hit by it. Thanks to the NDP government of Alberta, the people with the lowest incomes have been able to obtain refunds. They receive cheques based on a rebate system connected with the carbon tax, and this makes it possible to achieve one of the objectives mentioned by my colleague. What my colleague said was that people with the lowest incomes will be the ones hardest hit by this. In Alberta, they have managed to find a good solution. I encourage my colleagues to consider that measure.

In our tax system, we already have a way of giving a rebate on the GST, and people are thus able to get reimbursed for a certain amount connected with that tax. This would be an opportunity for the federal government to examine that option in more depth, as it prepares to put a price on carbon.

● (1810)

We may differ on the definitions, but a price on carbon covers all forms of pricing. We could therefore consider this option for compensating low-income people, as Alberta has done. We could also give them a refund on the GST, an option that may be more generous for low-income Canadians. This would be a way of finding a compromise so that our tax system remained as simple as possible, even though it is already very complex, and at the same time achieve my colleague's objectives, that is, not to unduly affect low-income people.

I will be very happy to hear my other colleagues' comments on this bill, and I hope to hear opinions from all sides.

Private Members' Business

[English]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Langley—Aldergrove for this important debate today. Bill C-342 would make amendments to exclude the collection of GST and HST on provincial carbon pricing systems.

I have unequivocally opposed the carbon tax since my very first words in the House of Commons on behalf of Lakeland. Since December 2015, I have questioned the carbon tax here in the House and in committees. I was the first MP to sponsor a petition against the carbon tax, with over 10,000 signatures. I fight for oil and gas workers, for small business owners, families, and for everyday Canadians, all of whom are rightfully angry and worried about their futures. This blatant tax grab is not environmental policy. It is a tax hike, a cash grab, full stop. It is all economic pain for no actual environmental gain.

Immediately, I opposed the Liberals forcing a carbon tax on all Canadians, and I oppose the Liberals' anti-energy agenda at every step. The Liberals say provinces and territories must comply by 2018, or a carbon tax will be forced on them. I oppose the Liberals' anti-energy agenda by supporting pipelines and LNG projects, all Canadian natural resources development, and Albertans.

Last year, the Prime Minister told Canadians, "All revenues generated under this system will stay in the province or territory where they are generated." Now, Canadians know that is not at all the case.

As recently as April 2017, internal documents show the Liberals plan to collect billions in new tax dollars by taxing the carbon tax. That is a tax on a tax. This grab will result in more revenue for the Liberals, and less money for hard-working Canadians.

There is no guarantee from the Liberals at all that provinces and territories will ensure revenue neutrality. In Alberta and British Columbia, the GST collected by the Liberals on provincial carbon taxes in 2017-2018 will be \$65 million from both provinces. In 2018-2019, Albertans will pay \$140 million. British Columbians will pay \$110 million in GST collected from the carbon taxes, all going into federal coffers.

The Liberals' claims are just not true. It is a scam. The Liberals know they are getting new revenue by taxing the carbon tax. In fact, they admit it in their own budget projections. Budget 2016 even shows a 21% increase in GST revenues between 2015 and 2021, despite the federal GST rate staying at 5%, and despite the Canadian economy projected to only grow by 15% during the same time period. There is no doubt this increase is coming directly from this tax on a tax scheme.

Canadians are rightfully worried. They are concerned about where their hard-earned tax dollars are going, and it is just the beginning. The Liberals are hiding the details from Canadians on the long-term costs, and the full economic impacts of the carbon tax.

Environment Canada says the carbon tax would have to be \$300 a tonne by 2050 in order to reach emissions targets. Canada can reduce emissions, like it did for the first time in Canadian history, under the previous government, without a carbon tax. Crushing the economy is not the only solution.

The Liberals claim the tax will be revenue neutral, but it is not. Alberta's NDP claimed its carbon tax was revenue neutral simply because it was spending the proceeds on pet projects. B.C.'s carbon tax has not been neutral since 2013.

The carbon tax grab, and now the tax on the tax scheme, will punish Canadians, especially the poor and people on fixed incomes, those whose livelihoods depend on energy and agriculture, and Canadians who live in rural, remote and northern communities. It will hurt public institutions too. School boards will need to cope with millions of dollars in extra bills.

The Elk Island Catholic School board in Lakeland has to cover an additional \$82,000 in increased costs for this school year, and about \$143,000 in 2017-2018, for increased transportation and infrastructure costs because of the carbon tax, gutting budgets for necessities.

Municipalities will also struggle. St. Paul works to keep spending as low as possible, knowing the carbon tax will make it even harder to stay in the black in the next few years. Vegreville projected the carbon tax will hike the town costs by more than \$36,000 in 2017, and up to more than \$54,000 in 2018. These are significant costs for small towns, villages, counties, and MDs.

The carbon tax will hit all Canadians. A Lakeland resident near Vermilion shared a bill on Facebook recently. It showed a cost of \$778 on top of a \$900 bill on a single truckload of energy products to heat his home. A Bonnyville family-owned trucking business warned he will have to fire four people. The NDP carbon tax is the biggest tax hike in Alberta's history. It is a tax grab, not environmental policy. This broad-based tax on everything will not reduce emissions. Experts say carbon taxes have to be upward of \$1,200 to be punitive enough to reduce emissions.

● (1815)

The Liberals are using international agreements with all our allies and trading partners to justify their bad tax hikes and their damaging red tape. For example, the Paris agreement does not mandate a carbon tax on countries. It does not dictate policy for members. It does not even mandate emission limits for those countries. The Liberal carbon tax will not earn so-called social licence or approval from anti-energy extremists who will never grant it.

Private Members' Business

The federal Liberals and the provincial NDP are manipulating caring for the environment, a priority shared by all Canadians, all Albertans, and all parties. It is crass to suggest otherwise, and it is all politics to the Liberals. The Liberals are all talk, both betraying Albertans and energy workers, while breaking promises to Liberal voters who often have usually supported the Green Party and the NDP.

The Prime Minister claims provinces have a choice. However, there is no choice at all. At the beginning of the debate on the Paris agreement, before any MP had a chance to even say a word, before any provinces were consulted, he declared they must impose the carbon tax or Ottawa will do it for them. His Paris agreement motion included a carbon tax. I opposed, and still oppose, the carbon tax.

Globally, carbon taxes have led to economic disaster. Australia's carbon tax was repealed two years after it was created. What is alarming is that its policy was \$24 per metric tonne Canadian. That is roughly only half of what the Liberals are forcing on Canada. About 75,000 businesses paid the carbon tax directly or paid an equivalent penalty of duties and rebates. They almost always passed on part or all of that cost to customers, small businesses, and households, because they had to, hiking prices exponentially as a result.

However, after the economic consequences of that bad policy, Australians defeated the left-leaning government and elected a conservative coalition, which repealed the tax, and created an almost \$3 billion fund for industry incentives. Australia's economy is similar to Canada's. As a result of that failed policy, Australia's natural resources became less globally competitive. Canada should heed that example.

Here in Canada, British Columbia's carbon tax is often cited by proponents as ideal. It is not a theoretical debate. It has not reduced emissions. Every year, since 2010, B.C. emissions have increased. B.C.'s carbon tax was also sold as a revenue-neutral way of encouraging British Columbians to drive more fuel-efficient cars, make fewer trips, car pool, or switch to public transit. It was also applied to home heating and electricity in hopes of promoting more energy-efficient insulation and smaller homes, plus more conservation by families. That did not happen. The average Vancouverite's commute is close to 50 minutes one way, and longer than it was when the tax was imposed.

The promised gains never materialized. According to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the carbon tax raises nearly \$240 million a year, while the Lower Mainland's per litre transit tax raises \$320 million from the Vancouver area alone. Even though Vancouver has by far the highest gasoline prices on the continent, there has been no significant reduction in gasoline purchases.

Out of necessity, British Columbians quickly adapted and returned to their old levels of fuel consumption, but with less money for essentials and the ever-rising costs of housing. This broad-based tax on everything increases the price of everything for everyone. It will rise over time, taking \$38 billion away from Canadians annually by 2022.

The Liberals must be honest with Canadians. This is not about environmental stewardship. It will not earn social licence from those

who are anti-energy or anti-Alberta. It is only about getting more revenue for a government that believes the budget will balance itself, that promised a so-called modest deficit, and has already racked up the largest deficit in Canadian history outside of war or recession. The Liberals started with a surplus, and two years later they are mortgaging the economic future of young Canadians. Their GST on the carbon tax is just another way for them to take even more from hard-working Canadians.

All members should support this bill. The Liberals should stop hiding the details, end this scam, and end this tax on tax.

● (1820)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, I will let the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, who is up next, know that there are only about seven and a half minutes remaining in the time for private members' business. He will have the remainder of his time when the House next resumes debate on the question.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where to begin, but listening to the member we cannot let the facts confuse reality when reality is quite different from what has been portrayed by the insertion of the word fact. In fact, those facts the member is using are not correct. Let me shed some light on reality, so the member, or people who might be listening, will have a better idea of what we are talking about.

The member sponsored a bill and says, "We in the Conservative Party do not support cascading taxes". That is what it is. I understand it because even in the Manitoba Legislature, the issue of cascading tax is a fairly common issue.

Private Members' Business

The sponsor of the bill talked about this, saying the government is bad because it is having a tax on the price of carbon coming from British Columbia. I have news for the Conservative members of this House. The carbon pricing in British Columbia has been happening for the last decade. In other words, Stephen Harper, the former Prime Minister, had the very same policy. I do not quite understand why it is different now, and why things have changed, yet the members made statements saying, “We Conservatives do not support increasing taxes”, when in fact that is what they did on this very same issue. Then the member tries to give the impression that the Liberals do not support tax breaks. The facts speak quite differently.

The fact is when this government introduced legislation to give the single largest tax break to Canada's middle class, how did the Conservatives vote? They voted against it. We are the only party that voted in favour of the tax break giving nine million-plus Canadians more cash in their pockets.

Their argument is beyond me, and how they get across trying to convince Canadians they are the greatest defenders of taxes and giving Canadians more breaks. At the end of the day, when it comes right down to a vote, what do they do? They vote against it.

Now that Stephen Harper is no longer the Prime Minister, they are saying that even though Stephen Harper did not do it, we think the Liberals should do it, because we are Conservatives. Why did Stephen Harper not do it?

Then they talk about the Paris agreement. If we want an issue that really demonstrates that the national Conservative Party is out of touch with Canadians, let us talk about the price on carbon. Countries and jurisdictions around the world went to Paris. That included parties of a Progressive Conservative nature, NDP and Liberals, parties of all stripes went to Paris. When they got back to Canada, they had an idea. Here in Canada, we worked with different provinces and territories. With the exception of one province, the province of Saskatchewan, they all agreed it was time that Canada had a price on carbon. Why? Because we were actually listening to what Canadians wanted. Even in Alberta, there was actually a price on carbon. That was the commitment that the government made.

The point is, it is only the Conservative Party in Ottawa that believes Canadians are wrong, that there is no need for us to give any attention to our environment. Let me be bold and make the suggestion that it could be that the Conservative Party, which is on that island—

● (1825)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I would ask hon. members to restrain their comments. We will continue with the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the interjection. There are so many naysayers on the other side, and that is one of the ways they justify it. Many of those members still believe that we do not have to worry about climate change, that Canada's footprint is so small, from a world perspective, that we do not have any responsibility. A vast majority of Canadians would disagree with that. Canada needs to not only do the right thing but demonstrate global leadership. Canadians expect that of the government. It seems that only the Conservatives deny climate change.

I want to highlight a couple of points. The first is the idea that a price on carbon is going to destroy the Canadian economy. The previous speaker said that it would destroy the global economy. British Columbia is one of the most progressive provinces in Canada in terms of economic growth. One would be challenged to find another province that has done as well as B.C. economically, yet it has had a price on carbon for the last decade. This fear factor the Conservatives like to espouse is just wrong. They do not want the facts to get in the way of their fearmongering.

The member said that only the Conservatives care about the province of Alberta and the oil industry. What did Stephen Harper do for the oil industry? Under his government, there was not one inch of pipeline built toward tidewater. In 18 months we not only have a process but we have approvals for two pipelines that will generate thousands of jobs for all Canadians. All regions will benefit.

Canadians finally have a government that works with provincial entities to make things happen, and that is what will have the impact Canadians want. We will work hard for Canada's middle class and for those aspiring to be part of it. We will ultimately see more jobs and a healthier environment. There is so much more to come.

Private Members' Business

●(1830)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader will have two and a half minutes remaining in his time when the House next resumes debate on the question.

[Translation]

The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the item is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

[For continuation of proceedings, see part B]

Immigration in Atlantic Canada	
Mrs. Lockhart	12320
Alberta Great Kids Award Winner	
Mr. Eglinski	12320
World Oceans Day	
Mr. Hardie	12320
Terrorist Attack in Tehran	
Mr. Ehsassi	12320
Summer Party	
Mr. Clarke	12321
Status of Women	
Ms. Sidhu (Brampton South)	12321
No. 1 Saint-Hyacinthe Cadet Corps	
Ms. Sansoucy	12321
Community Leader	
Mr. Dreeshen	12321
Terrorist Attack in Tehran	
Mr. Jowhari	12321

ORAL QUESTIONS

Foreign Investment	
Ms. Bergen	12322
Mr. Bains	12322
Ms. Bergen	12322
Mr. Bains	12322
Ms. Bergen	12322
Mr. Bains	12322
Mr. Deltell	12322
Mr. Bains	12322
Mr. Deltell	12322
Mr. Bains	12323
Mr. Mulcair	12323
Mr. Bains	12323
Mr. Mulcair	12323
Mr. Bains	12323
Foreign Affairs	
Mr. Mulcair	12323
Mr. Bains	12323
Mr. Mulcair	12323
Mr. Bains	12324
Infrastructure	
Ms. Watts	12324
Mr. Sohi	12324
Ms. Watts	12324
Mr. Sohi	12324
Mr. Rayes	12324
Mr. Sohi	12324
Mr. Rayes	12324
Mr. Sohi	12324
Mr. Poilievre	12324
Mr. Sohi	12325
Access to Information	
Mr. Poilievre	12325

Mr. MacKinnon	12325
Government Appointments	
Mr. Choquette	12325
Mr. Casey (Charlottetown)	12325
Ms. Mathysen	12325
Mr. Casey (Charlottetown)	12325
Mr. Brassard	12325
Ms. Chagger	12325
Mr. Brassard	12325
Ms. Chagger	12326
Mr. Gourde	12326
Ms. Chagger	12326
Foreign Investment	
Ms. Raitt	12326
Mr. Bains	12326
Fisheries and Oceans	
Mr. Donnelly	12326
Mr. LeBlanc	12326
Ms. Malcolmson	12326
Mr. Garneau	12326
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Mr. Fraser (Central Nova)	12327
Mr. Hussen	12327
National Defence	
Mr. Bezan	12327
Mr. Rioux	12327
Mr. Paul-Hus	12327
Mr. Rioux	12327
Softwood Lumber	
Mr. Zimmer	12327
Ms. Rudd	12327
Mr. Godin	12328
Mr. Leslie	12328
Fisheries and Oceans	
Mr. Johns	12328
Mr. Garneau	12328
Dairy Industry	
Ms. Brosseau	12328
Mr. MacAulay	12328
Public Safety	
Mr. Cooper	12328
Mr. Goodale	12328
Mr. Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	12328
Mr. Goodale	12329
Taxation	
Mr. Warawa	12329
Ms. McKenna	12329
Employment	
Mr. Eyolfson	12329
Ms. Hajdu	12329
Rail Transportation	
Mr. Berthold	12329
Mr. Garneau	12329

Indigenous Affairs	
Mr. Stetski	12329
Ms. McKenna	12329

International Trade	
Mrs. Nassif	12330
Ms. Goldsmith-Jones	12330

Veterans Affairs	
Mrs. Wagantall	12330
Mr. Hehr	12330

Official Languages	
Mr. Boudrias	12330
Mr. Rioux	12330
Mr. Boudrias	12330
Mr. Rioux	12330

Points of Order	
Oral Questions	
Mr. Mulcair	12331
Ms. Raitt	12331

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Cannabis Act	
Bill C-45. Second reading	12331
Amendment negatived	12332
Motion agreed to	12333
(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee) ..	12333

Business of the House	
Ms. Bergen	12333
Ms. Chagger	12333

Privilege	
Alleged Premature Disclosure of Contents of Bill C-49	
—Speaker's Ruling	
The Speaker	12334

Privilege	
Statements by Members	
Mr. Ouellette	12334

Business of Supply	
Opposition Motion—Nuclear Disarmament	
Motion	12336

Mr. Lamoureux	12336
Mr. Cannings	12337
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	12337
Mr. DeCoursey	12338
Ms. Laverdière	12339
Mr. McKay	12339
Mr. Stetski	12339
Mr. McKay	12340
Mr. Boulterice	12341
Ms. Laverdière	12341
Mr. Boulterice	12341
Mr. Graham	12342
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	12343
Mr. Saganash	12343
Mr. Sorenson	12343
Mr. McKay	12345
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	12345
Mr. Kmiec	12345
Mr. Cannings	12347
Mr. Levitt	12347
Mr. Cannings	12348
Mr. Graham	12349
Mr. Kelly	12349
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	12349
Mr. Blaikie	12350
Division deemed demanded and deferred	12350

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Excise Tax Act	
Mr. Warawa	12350
Bill C-342. Second reading	12350
Mr. Gerretsen	12352
Mr. Dusseault	12353
Mr. Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs) ..	12353
Mr. Dusseault	12354
Mrs. Stubbs	12356
Mr. Lamoureux	12357

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, June 8, 2017
(Part B)

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 8, 2017

[Continuation of proceedings from part A]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

•(1830)

[English]

SALARIES ACT

The House resumed from June 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, an act to amend the Salaries Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Financial Administration Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-24. Upon taking office in November 2015, the Prime Minister established a gender-balanced, one-tier ministry of equals focused on delivering results for Canadians.

The proposed amendments to the Salaries Act fulfill the Prime Minister's commitment to introduce legislation to formalize the equal status of his ministerial staff. The bill does just that by adding to the Salaries Act the five ministerial positions that are currently minister of state appointments as well as three untitled positions, for a total of eight new positions. To offset the increase in positions, the bill removes the six regional development ministerial positions.

It has been suggested by critics of the bill that removal of the regional development ministerial positions is the first step in dismantling the regional development agencies. This is just not the case. Our government is committed to supporting and promoting economic development throughout Canada. This bill would not amend, in any way, the states and orders in council that create the regional development agencies. The Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development will continue to be responsible for all the regional development agencies.

This government is focused on growing the economy and strengthening the middle class. The regional development agencies are essential delivery partners in the government's plan to drive economic growth through innovation. They understand the unique needs of each region as well as the opportunities for economic development and diversification.

Let me expand on just a few examples of how the regional development agencies are working to grow the middle class in all parts of our country.

We are working with our regional partners in Atlantic Canada to do just that. We recognize that Atlantic Canada possesses competitive advantages that can bring new opportunities to economic growth. The region is home to great ideas, great products, great innovators, and a great drive to succeed.

The Hon. Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, along with his cabinet colleagues and the four Atlantic premiers, jointly announced the launch of the Atlantic growth strategy last year. Working with all 32 MPs in Atlantic Canada, this pan-Atlantic, whole-of-government strategy will direct targeted actions to stimulate Atlantic Canada's economy. The strategy will support both innovative and resource-based industries and increase job opportunities for Atlantic Canadians.

This is an unprecedented federal-provincial partnership. The Government of Canada is working together with the four provincial governments to build a vibrant economic future for Atlantic Canada. The Atlantic growth strategy will drive economic growth in the region by implementing targeted evidence-based actions under the following five priority areas: skilled workforce with immigration; innovation; clean growth and climate change; trade; and, finally, investment.

The Atlantic growth strategy will deliver bold action items, including a three-year immigration pilot aimed at addressing the unique labour market challenges in Atlantic Canada. This pilot project will help better match the needs of local employers with the skill sets of immigrants while helping to improve the attraction and retention of newcomers in Atlantic Canada.

The Atlantic growth strategy is different from past initiatives because of our strong commitment to federal-provincial collaboration, on a pan-Atlantic level, in making strategic investments and taking the actions needed to generate long-term clean and inclusive growth, create jobs, and position Atlantic Canada as a thriving, knowledge-driven economy. We are taking bold, targeted actions to stimulate the economy.

Government Orders

This is just one example of how regional development agencies strengthen the government's ability to support innovative, inclusive growth in every part of our country.

In Quebec, Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, CED, concluded its broad 2016 engagement strategy with the release of its new strategic plan 2016 for the next five years. CED's strategic plan is aligned with the innovation and skills plan to do the following: support growing and innovative businesses that generate high-quality jobs, particularly for the middle class; support specific businesses and regions in developing and adopting new technologies in a clean-growth economy; support communities to foster economic diversification from an inclusive growth perspective involving minority groups; and finally, foster the participation of indigenous people contributing to the economic growth of Quebec by encouraging entrepreneurship and social innovation.

• (1835)

The plan's success will be measured and assessed in terms of its ability to contribute directly to the objectives of the innovation and skills plan using indicators that include, among others, employment rates, digital transformation, business growth, international exports, the adoption of clean technologies, and the capacity to leverage private capital and foreign direct investment.

Most recently, the Hon. Navdeep Bains was in Sudbury to announce the launch of the northern Ontario prosperity strategy, our latest measure to—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. That was the second occasion. There was a little disorder the first time, and I let it pass, but I would remind the hon. member to refer to other members by their titles or ridings.

The hon. member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Mr. Speaker, the targeted approach of this strategy will help the northern Ontario region prosper. The strategy will build on the opportunities offered by emerging industries to create businesses and jobs for the northern population of the province. This strategy will also focus on working with indigenous communities to support their growth. Most importantly, this strategy will be developed in partnership with all the community and business leaders of northern Ontario and the province.

In the four western provinces, Western Economic Diversification Canada activities are guided by the government's innovation and skills plan for two departmental strategic priorities, which are innovation and inclusive economic growth, aligning the west with federal priorities. WD is implementing these priorities in a few different ways. The strategic investments the department is making across western Canada focus on growing and emerging sectors such as energy, information and communication, technologies, life sciences, aerospace, agrifood, and advanced manufacturing.

Through the western innovation initiative, WD invests in businesses to help them advance innovative products, processes, and services for the marketplace in western Canada and globally. Since 2014, WD has invested nearly \$97 million through the western innovation initiative and expects to create more than 1,600 jobs across the west.

The western diversification program funds strategic investments in initiatives with not-for-profit organizations that strengthen the economy of western Canada.

As a key way to create opportunities, WD convenes with stakeholders across western Canada to identify opportunities for collaboration in support of economic development, leading to a deep understanding of the unique considerations in advancing diversification goals in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia and their broad regional perspectives.

WD also actively supports inclusive participation in the economy. For example, through its Western Canada Business Service Network, WD provides small and medium-sized businesses and entrepreneurs, including indigenous peoples, women, francophones, persons with disabilities, and rural communities, with services and resources to help them succeed and grow.

WD is a nimble organization that has demonstrated its responsiveness in the recent past by leading the federal response to the Fort McMurray wildfires in 2016. It delivers unique programs, such as the drywall support program, and serves as a delivery agent in support of other federal initiatives, such as INAC's strategic partnerships initiative, which enables indigenous participation in economic development.

The government is investing over \$1 billion each year through the regional development agencies to support business and community growth, in every part of Canada, toward an innovative, clean, and inclusive economy. The RDAs understand the unique needs of each region as well as the opportunities for economic development and diversification.

These regional strategies are only a few examples of how regional development agencies are working hard for Canada.

• (1840)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard my colleague reference northern Ontario, the Maritimes, ACOA, and the western economic diversification fund. He may have mentioned FedDev Ontario, but I missed that if he did. It is another very important economic development agency. I have seen first-hand the incredible difference that is made by one of these regional groups. Their ears are close to the ground. They can hear what the needs are at the regional level.

It is obvious that the Liberals are handing over significant power to unelected civil servants, who are making these decisions, and also one very overworked minister from Mississauga. Even the Liberal task force itself admitted it, and I want to read from it directly:

Four to five months can be a lifetime for a business, especially for a startup. Following the approval of an application, finalizing the related contribution agreement may take anywhere from two to 12 months, further impeding a business' opportunity to execute successfully.

Government Orders

It is obvious that the centralized approach that the government is taking is impeding the ability of the regions to have their unique needs taken into consideration, and at the same time, it is unnecessarily slowing down the ability to get these funds into the hands of start-ups and businesses, which really need them.

I wonder why my colleague and his party are insisting on this kind of slowing down of the process.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Mr. Speaker, I am going to have to say that, if we look back to when the previous government had ministers of state, it would have left us in a way better state than now.

When we took over, there were challenges across the board. If we look at Atlantic Canada, the problems that were there when we first started have been there for a long time. We were able to fix those problems, and now moving forward, Atlantic Canada is actually doing a lot better. ACOA is doing a lot better and reaching the needs of the people who are there.

That is my answer.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, just to be clear, with all of the representation in this House from Atlantic Canada, on that side of the House there is not one person from Atlantic Canada who has the interest of Atlantic Canadians at heart to a sufficient degree to qualify to be the minister of ACOA.

I find that hard to accept. I am really surprised to see that the Liberal members from Atlantic Canada are not standing up for their region and asking that the unique needs of their Maritime region be given a higher priority.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Mr. Speaker, we have 32 extremely qualified members from the Atlantic region who do not stop advocating for their region. Day after day, inside of caucus, in the hallways, I have not stopped hearing about Atlantic Canada.

They are examples of what MPs should be doing to advocate for their region.

• (1845)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had the great honour to be the parliamentary secretary for western economic diversification, and what I was able to see is how nimble, agile, and responsive an organization could be when leadership is in the area.

What happens is, when proposals and suggestions have to be sent through another layer, which is the minister of Toronto, in Toronto, some of that on-the-ground nimble responsiveness is lost. As a member from the western provinces, I think the member should be ashamed to support a structure that has taken away the empowerment of the local people to be nimble in their decision-making.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Mr. Speaker, I am far from being ashamed.

In my career, I have opened 140 restaurants. I know leadership comes in many different forms. Just because something was done one way does not make it the best way to do it. As an MP, I work with western economic development all the time. We are able to share that information and pass it on. Leadership comes in many different forms.

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I am hearing here today is another reflection of the disconnection that members opposite have with Atlantic Canada.

We have been very strong in advocating for the issues that are important to us and the things that our constituents are talking to us about. Just today, in fact, we talked very strongly about what has been going on in the immigration committee, the filibustering, and the disrespect of the witnesses who have appeared to try to make a difference in the economy of Atlantic Canada.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Mr. Speaker, echoing the comments of my colleague, what we see in the House and what we see in committees is shameful, to me, because we have a lot of work to do. When I see parties playing partisan politics, our constituents are the ones who are suffering. We have to be able to collaborate better than that. We came here to do a job. I came here to do a job and not to play games.

I am doing my job by reaching out to my constituents and reaching out to the people who make a difference, such as Western Economic Diversification.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I note that the member's speech reflected on and told us at great length the responsibilities of each of the economic development organizations. However, what he did not talk about at all was the fact that this piece of legislation would create three mysterious cabinet minister positions. I wonder if he could share with the House what these three mysterious positions might possibly be and how the Liberals can justify putting forward legislation that is so vague in terms of its intent.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Mr. Speaker, that is just like the other side: let us not focus on the great things that are happening or the things that are important, but let us try to focus on things that actually do not make a difference at this point.

Yes, there are three other ministerial positions that the government is allowing for down the line, but that does not take away from what the legislation is for. In 2015, the gender-balanced cabinet was announced, and this legislation would fix the issue so that all ministers are the same, one and all. We are not separating junior ministers from senior ministers. We are focusing on a team, and that is the point of moving forward.

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to ask my colleague if he is aware that the role of the opposition, which does not control the legislative agenda, is to fine-tune bills and to shed light on the problems in this bill.

When he talks to me about equal pay for equal work, I am most certain that this is not what the bill proposes.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for his question. I apologize that I will answer it in English.

[*English*]

There is a difference between an opposition that opposes and one that obstructs. When I look at how long it took in this House to settle a question of somebody getting on and off a bus, when we should have been debating merits of a budget, for instance, that is what I do not understand.

Government Orders

We have so many things going on in this country that we need to focus on, yet we choose to focus on things that do not help our constituents, that do not impact people out of this room. We are speaking in this hall, but people in Canada expect us to speak for them.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before resuming debate, I would like to inform hon. members that there have been more than five hours of debate during this first round. Consequently, all subsequent interventions shall be ten minutes for speeches and five minutes for questions and comments.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to stand, although I am disappointed that I did not get a 20-minute slot. Perhaps within 10 minutes I can condense and share exactly what my concerns are with this piece of legislation.

What we have is Bill C-24, which is an act to amend the Salaries Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Financial Administration Act. It focuses on three areas. I am going to talk briefly about the first two areas, and then perhaps I will go into a bit more detail on one of the most substantial concerns that I have.

The bill would actually create eight minister positions. I will talk about the five minister of state positions later, but it would create three mysterious ministerial positions. If people could imagine being a board member for Nortel or some other large corporation and the CEO came to them with a proposal stating that the company needs this many vice-presidents including a vice-president of finance, a vice-president of human resources, and that it needs three more vice-presidents but the CEO is not going to say what they are there for and what they are going to do, what do members think the response would be, as a shareholder or as a chairman of this particular organization? They would tell the CEO to go back to the drawing board and come back with job descriptions and a full analysis of why the company needs the three positions, what they are for, and what they would do. It is inconceivable, in any organization other than perhaps a Liberal-run federal government, that the organization would create three mysterious positions.

This is not just a matter of mysterious positions. There is a budget that would go along with these. If someone is a member of Parliament and is all of a sudden given a ministerial position, it comes with additional funds, so for these three positions it is probably an additional quarter of a million dollars and then a whole lot of other associated expenses like cars and drivers and office spaces. Therefore, this little piece in this legislation is probably over \$1 million, and the Liberals are not telling us what it is for. It is absolutely inexcusable, and if members on that side vote for spending \$1 million, or for authorizing a structure for \$1 million, they should be ashamed of themselves. We have a government that has a spending problem already, and the Liberals think nothing of putting in front of us a piece of legislation that would allow for probably \$1 million-plus because they need to have a bigger cabinet or cannot describe what those positions would be. Certainly the

backbenchers in the Liberal government need to go back to their executive branch and ask what these positions are for. That is absolutely ludicrous.

The next area that has been alluded to, certainly in the previous speech, is the need to consolidate the regional development agencies. Sometimes a federal government in a country as large as Canada has an enormous geography and enormous variations across the country. Many of us here have had the privilege of travelling across our country from coast to coast to coast, and we see the differences. Some of the things that government does should be centralized. There are certainly important functions that are best done by a minister who represents the whole of Canada, and we can look at defence and many other departments. However, there was something about the economic development agencies. The economic development agencies were relatively small, they had a relatively small budget, and they were designed to be nimble and responsive to the culture and needs of specific areas. As members can imagine, in the Maritimes people have a very different set of challenges from what perhaps Alberta's oil patch is having right now, or those in B.C.

• (1855)

We still fail to see how a minister from Toronto, busy with a very large portfolio, can give the attention that is needed to make those quick, nimble decisions and be responsive. I am not sure if this structural change is in the best interests of what we do and how our economic development agencies deliver service. Again, a Toronto minister is not seeing the challenges.

The Liberals talked about how proud they were of the work they did with first nations communities. People who live in Toronto would not be as aware of these issues as would a minister from British Columbia, who understands and visits these communities all the time and recognizes perhaps some of the opportunities and the challenges that the indigenous communities face. Again, an urban minister, as good as he or she might be, would have challenges in that area. Certainly, I disagree with that part of the legislation.

However, the area I most fundamentally disagree with is making all the ministers of state positions into full cabinet positions. I want to talk about that to some degree.

I will again use the analogy of outside the bubble of Parliament. When people look at remuneration of employees, they look at their responsibilities. Responsibilities include what kind of decisions they have to make, what kind of manpower they have to supervise, and what kind of budget they are responsible for. I think that applies to every example I can think of in the public service.

In the public service in the area of health care in British Columbia there is a process. A system is used to analyze the responsibilities of the job to determine what the wage remuneration will be. That sounds reasonable to me. I believe it is commonly used within the public sector.

Let us take a look at what the ministers are doing.

Government Orders

The Liberals are going to create full ministers positions for a number of positions, and I will go over them specifically. However, the Minister of National Defence is responsible for the armed forces and the Department of National Defence. He stands ready to perform three key roles, which are protecting Canada and defending our sovereignty; defending North America in co-operation with the United States, our closest ally; and contributing to international peace and security. The budget was \$18.7 billion over three years. Planned spending is to increase enormously. There are 22,000 people within those operations.

We can compare that to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, and I am not saying it is not a responsible position. It is an important position as we look at our democratic system. However, the department does not have an enormous budget. It does not have huge manpower for which it is responsible. To be frank, there is no way it would automatically get a large increase in its dollars. It does not make any sense.

However, when the Prime Minister swore his cabinet in, with great pride, he said he had a gender-equal cabinet. Then someone pointed out to him that while he did have a gender-equal cabinet, five members were junior ministers positions, and those five were women. In order to solve that problem, he decided to make them full ministers.

There are other ways he could have solved that problem and been reasonable and appropriate. There is no reason that the Minister of Democratic Institutions could not be a man. There is no reason that the Minister of Science could not have been male. He could have had his gender-equal cabinet without having to create new positions for the ministers of state. The whole thing is very convoluted and confusing.

● (1900)

A difference in the funding went toward the salaries, but also some ministers felt they had to spend over \$1 million to renovate their office. This is just another example of a Prime Minister who pays no attention to taxpayer dollars. It is inexcusable.

Bill C-24 is a terribly flawed and irresponsible bill. I hope most members will vote against it.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke about the minister from Toronto not being able to work in the best interests of his riding. She gave the example of B.C. and not being aware of the challenges there.

I am come from Whitby. A lot of members in here represent ridings the size of small countries. Within that context, we need to listen to what various constituents have to say. I listen to constituents with disabilities. I listen to farmers. I listen to any constituent who wishes to speak to me. I bring their concerns back to the House. Ministers listen to people in various jurisdictions across the country and they bring their concerns back to the House in the same manner as I do.

Would the member opposite not agree that she has the capability to do that as well?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the member just made my point. She is one member of Parliament representing a huge region. I

am sure she is doing a lot of work to understand the perspectives of people in her riding.

There are 338 ridings across the country. There are a lot of different regions. We are simply saying that the nimbleness, the ability to understand the regions, the ability to make decisions is best left to a minister who is very knowledgeable. No one can be an expert on everything. Sometimes we need to have that closer to home responsiveness.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech, which I listened to carefully and agree with on many points.

Given their so-called feminist approach, are the Liberals not simply adding insult to injury with Bill C-24? The injury is saying that women will be confined to the role of minister of state. The insult is also telling them to not bother talking about their qualifications or anything else, because they are going to get the same salary as ministers so it is a non-issue.

Men and women are known to be equally qualified and capable of being either ministers or ministers of state, and the salary should match the responsibilities of the job. This feels like a cover-up. If this had happened to me, I would not necessarily be happy to be getting a raise without having to take on the added responsibilities that would normally go along with it.

● (1905)

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I absolutely agree, Mr. Speaker. I would be insulted if I thought the reason I had a ministerial position was because I was meeting some kind of quota. I am so proud of the people on our front bench. They were not put there to meet a quota. They are there because they are capable and responsible individuals.

The Prime Minister felt he needed a gender-equal cabinet, and that is fine. However, there was no reason not to have men in those ministers of state positions. He would have had his two ministers of state and however many ministers. Instead, he put five women in those roles and then was embarrassed because people said that it was not gender-equal.

We are going to pay a lot more than \$1 million to deal with the problem of the Prime Minister making promises he did not keep.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in reference to the \$1 million, could the member explain why Stephen Harper had 40 cabinet ministers, while we have 30? This government believes that each cabinet minister is equal. The former government, even with its 40 cabinet ministers, had unequal ministers. How can the member justify that?

Government Orders

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I do not think the member listened to my speech. I talked about normal businesses, even the public service, and how they determined the wages. They determine it by the responsibility of the position, which includes the budget of the organization. It is quite reasonable, and it has been done for many years. There is a recognition that there is a role for ministers of state and there is a role for ministers.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this subject this evening. In fact, just this morning, I attended a meeting of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, where the President of the Treasury Board appeared as a witness to answer questions on the use of vote 1c. Since November 4, 2015, the salaries of ministers of state have been increased under vote 1c so that they earn the same as portfolio ministers who have deputy ministers and hundreds of public servants working for them.

I will explain later why the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates and the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance are concerned about this.

I am increasingly disheartened by this government because it seems that, today in the House, we should not be talking about Bill C-24, which seeks to realize one of the federal government's unattainable fantasies. Instead, we should be talking about our duty as citizens, what we can do for our country, what we can do tomorrow morning to improve our community, what we can do to further honour our men and women in uniform, and how each of us can serve their country.

We could talk about regional fairness, since Bill C-24 deals with these kinds of discussions, as the Liberals decided to abolish ministers representing Canada's various economic regions—Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario, the Prairies, British Columbia, and the territories.

We could also talk about wealth creation. The Liberal government likes to go on and on about working for the well-being of the middle class. I have a problem with that, because we should instead be talking about wanting to make life better for all Canadians. I do not know why the government insists on focusing only on one class instead of talking about all Canadians. What I liked about the Right Hon. Stephen Harper is that he would always talk about all Canadian families. He did not talk just about only one social class.

That said, I am duty bound to oppose this bill today, and instead of talking about civic duty and serving one's country, I will speak to you about C-24.

Bill C-24 seeks to elevate ministers of state, some of whom do not have a portfolio or a department, to the same status as ministers who oversee an actual department with thousands of employees, deputy ministers, and teams of hundreds of officials, and all the real estate that goes with it. These are the real departments, National Defence, Public Services and Procurement, Transport, the list goes on. There are 25 actual departments, give or take.

They want to give the same minister's salary to those who do not have drivers or real responsibilities; they want to give them the same salary as traditional cabinet ministers.

It is ironic because Bill C-24 would create eight new ministerial positions, including three "mystery" ministers, whose duties, objectives and responsibilities are not yet known. The bill would eliminate the positions of six ministers representing the regions; now, there is only one minister representing Toronto with a population of seven million; it is huge and that is a major responsibility. He will be the one now representing the Acadian people, the Acadian peninsula and their concerns about the fishery, lobster and crab. It does not make any sense.

Bill C-24 would also amend the Salaries Act, which is a good initiative. The government wants to correct a mistake in parliamentary law, or rather change parliamentary law so that it need not be in breach of it.

The very honourable senator Mr. Smith, chair of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, contacted me to bring the problem to my attention so I could raise it with the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. The government is using the supplementary estimates to pay the additional salaries of ministers of state, when the parliamentary rules tell us that there are three reasons for why we must not do that.

● (1910)

For example, Beauchesne, paragraph 935, refers to page 8601 of the *Debates* of March 25, 1981:

A supply item ought not to be used to obtain authority which is the subject of legislation.

Then paragraph 937 refers to page 10546 of the *Debates* of June 12, 1981:

The government may not by use of an Appropriation Act obtain authority it does not have under existing legislation.

This is what the government is trying to do today. It is trying to use us to obtain an authority it does not have under the Salaries Act. Lastly, paragraph 941 refers to pages 94 and 95 of the *Debates* of February 5, 1973:

If a Vote in the Estimates relates to a bill not yet passed by Parliament, then the authorizing bill must become law before the authorization of the relevant Vote in the Estimates by an Appropriation Act.

Therefore, parliamentary rules tell us that ministers of state in the Prime Minister's Office should not have gotten a pay increase effective November 4, 2015. They should not have had it until Bill C-24 was officially adopted. It will not be adopted by us Conservatives, but by the majority Liberals. Good for them!

The senators put it down in black and white:

Our committee is concerned about the recurrent practice of using supplementary estimates to pay certain ministers' salaries prior to the enactment of amendments to the Salaries Act, and raises this question in the context of Bill C-24.

A Senate committee has been studying these issues for several months and spending a lot more time on it than the House of Commons.

When it comes to parity, the Liberals like to implement government policies that fit with their ideology and how they think the world should be, but some of their actions may have unintended consequences that they do not even see because they are so blinded by their ideology.

Government Orders

They say they want a gender-balanced cabinet, but, having given the matter considerable thought, I have come to the conclusion that this ideal could have a very unfortunate unintended consequence. If we say that cabinet must be gender-balanced, this means that there will never be a cabinet with a majority of women, yet we have seen plenty of cabinets with a majority of men over the past 150 years. Now we are telling women that they will never be in the majority in cabinet regardless of their skills, their beliefs, and their political strengths. No, now we must have parity, 50-50.

I would even add that this means cabinet will never be less than 50% male. What a paradox. They say the goal is to protect and expand women's rights, but if we examine this from a political and philosophical perspective, it looks more like a way to rein in women's progress in the political arena. Is that not an interesting thought?

Instead of talking about parity in cabinet, since I have just shown that it is nothing more than a pipe dream that actually hurts the advancement of women in cabinet, we should be talking about parity for the founding peoples. That is what is important in Canada: French Canadians, English Canadians, the fact that Quebec has still not signed the constitution, and the fact that there are demands coming from all sides, whether in the west, which has reforms it would like to see, in the maritime provinces, or in Quebec. We should be talking about parity in our country in terms of English and French culture and making sure that everyone is comfortable in the constitutional environment. Instead, we are stuck talking about a bill that is meant to correct a mistake borne of blind ideological fervour.

What I find increasingly deplorable is this government saying it is objective and bases what it does on scientific facts.

• (1915)

First, it is an arrogant thing to say, because it suggests the party previously in government was not. The truth is that the Liberals themselves are so fixated on their own ideology that it is preventing them from acknowledging some of the significant impacts of their legislation.

Ultimately, I would like to say that, ideology aside, the Liberals cannot pay ministers higher salaries before the bill is passed, and yet, that is what they have been doing for the past two years, which is no laughing matter.

[English]

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague began by saying that we should be talking about our communities, ways to improve them, ways to ensure that we have jobs, and do all the great things that our communities expect us to do when we get here. However, I, along with everyone else in the House, sat through almost a week in which we talked about a question of privilege about two members who did not get here on time when everybody else could get here on time.

I wonder how the member correlates these two messages of needing to talk about communities, yet spending time talking about a question of privilege over two members who wanted to be leaders and who could not show up on time.

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, the question of privilege existed even before the creation of Canada. Without privilege in this chamber, without the secure fact of accessing this chamber, we cannot even start thinking about helping our communities. We are here first and foremost to represent our constituents, but the question of privilege is never a question that takes time for no reason. It is fundamental. It is in the convention. It is in the history of Canada and our great parliamentary tradition from Britain.

• (1920)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what was it, five days, seven days, of hearing the same thing over and over again? I sat in the House last night not as happy as I would have been if I was at home with the dog. I heard members on the opposite side kind of grousing a little about being here talking about the bill.

I wonder if the member, looking at the totality of the bill and all of the other things that we are trying to do, would like to have some of that time back from saying the same thing about privilege time after time, so that we could have dealt with the bill when it should have been dealt with.

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, what the member does not say is that the privilege question of two of our members here on the Conservative side of the chamber was part of a build-up of frustration, because the government has treated the opposition basically like garbage.

The Liberals tried to repeat the same thing they did last year with Motion No. 6. They tried to cut the speaking time. The forefathers of this country were speaking for three hours here sometimes, every member, but the Liberals said 10 minutes was way too much. Can members believe that? What is the goal of being here if we cannot even speak 10 minutes? That was the situation.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his impassioned speech and his commitment to parliamentary democracy, but I think if he would have had more time he would have probably delved into the area of these three mysterious ministers that cabinet has given approval for. They have no job descriptions. We have no idea what they are going to be doing. All we are doing is giving the government a blank cheque, and giving them a blank cheque at a time of increasing deficits is certainly not the way that my constituents want our government to work.

I wonder if my colleague would comment on how his constituents might feel about another blank cheque to a government that is going deeper into debt every day.

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, certainly my constituents feel that the Liberals have been given enough blank cheques already.

Government Orders

Again, the member over there spoke about respect, that we took too many days to speak about a question of privilege, which is terrible to say. The Liberals say they respect us, but they say we should just sign on to a bill that would create new ministries that they do not want to tell us about yet. They want us to vote on the bill, but they do not want to tell us exactly what is going on. This is how much respect they have for us. This is how much respect they have had for us for two years now, which is why we came to that situation in March, April, and May, and that is why we are sitting until midnight tonight.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I see lots of opposition, but I still do not think we have quorum right now.

The Deputy Speaker: It would appear that we do have a quorum.

We will now resume debate with the hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have to say I am disappointed to be here tonight, sitting until midnight, spending time on a bill like this. Of course, we had some remarks in earlier questions that tried to make it the responsibility of the opposition that the government has not gotten through its agenda, which is simply absurd.

The government has had all the time in the world to get its agenda through, and the fact is that it has a very small agenda even at that. The average number of bills I have heard by this time in a government's life would be 40 or 45. We are looking at a government that has passed something like 18. There is not a lot to do, yet we are still sitting until midnight to get it done. It seems a bit absurd to me.

I had questions about why we had a motion on the Paris accord, but I came to a different conclusion. I thought it was quite useful, in the end, to have a motion on the Paris accord because it demonstrated that the Liberals' and the Conservatives' positions were exactly the same on the Paris accord. They voted together. I thought that was a useful clarification for the public that the Liberals and the Conservatives have the same targets and the same lack of action on the Paris accord. I will take back my criticism of that motion as being a waste of time. I really thought it was going to be a waste of time, but I take back my criticism of that one and I say it was actually quite useful.

On Bill C-24, the bill before us tonight, I have to tell members about the number of calls, emails, and letters I have received from constituents on the bill. It would be zero. Nobody in my constituency cares at all about this bill. The only people who care about it are people who are total insiders in the Liberal Party.

The need for the bill was totally created by the Prime Minister's faux parity that he created in his cabinet. If he was really going to have a cabinet that had parity or equity between the genders, there would have been an equal number of men and women in the real, important jobs in cabinet. Instead, the Prime Minister created a problem by appointing women to mostly junior jobs in his cabinet. Now we have a bill in front of us to fix that problem. That seems absurd to me.

Why do we have differences between the pay of different ministers? I actually think it is a good idea. If there is a full minister who brings things to cabinet and has a department to run, that is a

different job from being a minister of state who does not have a whole set of programs to look after but has a reduced set of responsibilities. I can personally live with two different kinds of salaries if there are two different kinds of responsibilities, because that is the basic principle of pay equity. It is equal pay for work of equal value, and if it is different work it is fine to pay people differently.

The problem for the Prime Minister was, of course, that he put mostly women in the junior jobs and mostly men in the big jobs. Therefore, his cabinet did not look as equitable as it should have. As a result, we end up here in a midnight session debating a bill to fix the Prime Minister's political problem.

As I said, there was nobody interested in my riding. I am sure if people in my riding were watching they have already changed channels. I actually recommend that at this point, because I think the bill is a waste of parliamentary time.

We are talking about minister of state positions that would become regular minister positions: the Minister of La Francophonie, the Minister of Science, the Minister of Small Business and Tourism, the Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, and the Minister of Status of Women. I think those are all important jobs. I just do not think they are the same jobs as the Minister of National Defence or the Minister of Health or the Minister of Justice. I believe there are real differences.

The bill would not change anything about those jobs. It would not give those ministers new responsibilities that are the same level as the full ministers. They might actually be able to persuade me to support this if the bill were saying that the Minister of La Francophonie would have the same full powers of a minister to bring things to cabinet and would have a department to administer, but they would not.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: What don't they have?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I love being heckled on this because I do not have a whole lot to say on this, so the more heckling the better.

Mr. Speaker, another peculiar thing in the bill is that they have shoved in something that I actually kind of like, and that is the ministers of economic development agencies. I do not know what that is doing in the bill, but I guess the Liberals had to have some more to fluff it up and make it look more substantial.

Unfortunately, now the bill would eliminate the ministers of Western Economic Diversification, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, and the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency. All of those have important work to do.

Government Orders

●(1925)

I just do not understand the logic, but somehow we are going to eliminate those so we can bump up these others. I guess that must be why these points got into the same bill. Again, it does not make a whole lot of sense to me tonight, but it could be because we are at 7:30 and I have been speaking on various things since 10 o'clock this morning.

I guess the real question I have to ask the government tonight is, why are we not here debating legislation to implement real pay equity for Canadian women workers across the country? We had a committee that worked on this issue, did some very good work, reported back to the House, and recommended we have such legislation. Then somebody, somewhere, seems to have said, "That is hard. We cannot do that before 18 months. It has to wait." Instead we are debating this bill instead of a bill that would help some of the lowest-paid women workers in the country who have some of the more difficult jobs.

We have a tradition in this country when it comes to wages. We look at jobs and ask if they are dirty and done by men, and then we say that such jobs require a lot of money. However, if they are hard and require high levels of education but are done by women, such as nurses and caregivers, then they do not require a lot of money. We have things out of whack.

Why are we not standing here debating real pay equity legislation for those jobs in federal jurisdiction? That is what I would like to be working on tonight. That would interest my constituents. I would have had dozens and dozens of people talking to me about the best way to make pay equity a reality for women in this country, and not the silence I have had from my constituents on this bill.

I only have a couple more things I want to say. I am looking forward to the warning that my time is almost up. I am not taking this bill seriously. I have to thank the Speaker for the warning that I have a lot of time left. I am not taking it seriously, because, as I said at the beginning, it is not a serious piece of legislation. It is not something we should be spending our time on. There are so many problems for us to address in this country. There are so many things we could be putting our hard work into, and this is not one of them.

As one of six openly gay members, I am aware that the government promised an apology and promised to work on restitution for those who were harmed in their careers, harmed in their family life, harmed in many ways, perhaps by being fired from the public service for being gay or being kicked out of the military for being gay. A motion unanimously passed in the defence committee last October, calling for a revision of service records so that people who had served in the military and had already qualified for pensions but were dishonourably discharged for being gay could get the benefits they had already paid for and had already earned.

I would rather be standing here tonight talking about how we are going to implement that kind of legislation than talking about something that will only affect privileged women in cabinet. That is all this debate is about tonight, except for the Prime Minister's reputation, as I said earlier.

We have other things to tackle. In my riding, we have had some very severe problems with ocean debris. We are facing World

Oceans Day coming up tomorrow. We have a government that announced a coastal protection strategy, and I cannot even remember what it was called. It does not mention debris. There are no provisions at all for cleaning up the debris.

We heard earlier today in this House what has now become one of those truisms that soon, very soon, we will have more plastic by weight in the ocean than fish. That is a pretty sad commentary on where we are going. I would rather be spending my time tonight talking about bills to help reduce the plastics in the ocean. That is something we should tackle. That is an urgent problem.

Related to that, we could be tackling the question of abandoned vessels. We have all kinds of important work to do in this Parliament. Instead, we have Bill C-24 before us. I am happy to say that I will vote against this bill, probably at every stage, and probably every time it comes up. It will not really make a lot of difference, because we have a Liberal majority government, and this government has the arrogance to proceed with bills like this instead of the real priorities for Canadians. It disappoints me greatly.

As I have said before, I am kind of naive. I often think that the government will get its priorities straight, or should get its priorities straight, and get on with the real business that should be in front of this House.

●(1930)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed my colleague's speech, as I did before I became a member of the House. I have a lot of time for him and where he comes from, so this is a genuine question with no spice added.

We have looked at this issue from the standpoint of who has the more important job. Let us take two people. Let us take the Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities and let us take the Minister of Veterans Affairs. Who has the more important job?

Let us turn it on its head. I invite the member to comment on what happens when you look at the client. Does the veteran have more important needs than the disabled person? Therefore, if you are looking at the skills and the resources, you see that they may differ, but if you look at it from the client's point of view, then the whole question of equity becomes somewhat different.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to make sure that the member was addressing that question to the Chair.

The hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke.

●(1935)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, I look forward to your answer.

Government Orders

I know that the member earlier talked about preferring to be at home with his dog. I have two dogs and a partner at home, and while they are very used to my being away at this time of the year, I would like to be there. I am not sure how they feel at this point in the year.

Seriously, this is not about the clients at all and it is not about which issue is more important. If we take the very narrow sense of the bill, it is about ministers' responsibilities. All I said is that if they have different responsibilities, I am fine with their having different pay. I think this is simply aimed at correcting the political problem the Prime Minister created for himself when he said the Liberals have gender parity in cabinet and then proceeded to assign different levels of responsibilities to men and women.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am going to try to help my colleague. Like him, I believe the bill is a waste of time and we could have been more productive.

I would like to ask him a question. In his riding, Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, what will be the impact of eliminating the position of minister responsible for the economic development of the region? In his opinion, in practice, will this model be more effective or less effective than the previous one?

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for that serious question about the other part of the bill. In British Columbia, I have the privilege of representing a riding that probably has the lowest unemployment in British Columbia and probably the lowest in the entire country. For my riding specifically, that office and those programs had not had a big impact. Where they do have an impact in my province is on the northern end of Vancouver Island, the rural areas of Vancouver Island where opportunities, especially for young people, are quite limited. They also have a big impact in the interior of British Columbia and the north of British Columbia, and they have a very big impact in some of the larger aboriginal communities.

I am worried that the elimination of these people with a specific focus on the areas that really do need that economic development will cause some problems for us down the road.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague particularly mentioned defence, health, and justice. Two of those ministers are women, I might add. Then he said that there were portfolios that were not so serious. Would he explain why he does not think women are as serious, small business and tourism are not as serious, or francophonie is not as serious as those areas?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, I will assure the member I said no such thing. I said that responsibilities of the ministers differ, not that those are not important topics. There is also the amount of supervision they have to do of staff and the number of programs they have to manage, but it is not that the topics themselves are unimportant. They are very important, and I take them very seriously.

I have criticized the new position of Special Advisor to the Prime Minister on LGBTQ2 Issues. It amounts to little more than being the head gay, because it has no staff, it has no budget, it has no programs attached to it. That does not mean I do not think the topic is

important. I am a gay man in this country who has faced inequality through my whole life.

It does not mean I do not think it is important; I just recognize the difference in jobs.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, like many of my colleagues tonight, I feel it is very unfortunate that at this point, almost halfway through the government's mandate and approaching the summer months, we are sitting until midnight dealing with this kind of legislation.

Canada is entering tough negotiations with the United States regarding NAFTA. Global Islamic terrorism is on the rise. ISIS continues to control much of the Middle East. The oil and gas sector has still not rebounded, and Canadians are finding it harder and harder to buy their first home. However, we are here spending time on this, late at night: pay increases for ministers of state.

I wish I were joking, but the priorities of this government have never been more clear than right now. Liberals are committed to padding the pockets of Liberals at the expense of hard-working Canadian taxpayers. Many of these hard-working Canadians are up at the crack of dawn, or even earlier, and finish their days well after sundown. The farmers in my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga are an example. These hard-working men and women are now faced with the prospect of paying more so that ministers of state with no extra responsibilities can enjoy a pay hike. It is just so that our Prime Minister's mantra of "a minister is a minister is a minister" can have some so-called legitimacy.

The Liberal government has now spent two days' worth of regular sitting hours just this week to debate non-binding, really meaningless, motions. In one of them the Liberals were trying to play wedge politics, but it was unsuccessful, I might add. With the other, their goal could have been accomplished with a statement during statements by ministers, which can occur every day during routine proceedings.

I am not sure if this is a reflection of the Liberals' incompetence or the government House leader's inability to understand basic parliamentary scheduling. Whatever the cause might be, we find ourselves here, late at night, debating Bill C-24, an act to amend the Salaries Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Financial Administration Act.

Let me read a summary of the bill.

This enactment amends the Salaries Act to authorize payment, out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund, of the salaries for eight new ministerial positions. It authorizes the Governor in Council [—in other words, the cabinet—] to designate departments to support the ministers who occupy those positions and authorizes those ministers to delegate their powers, duties or functions to officers or employees of the designated departments. It also makes a consequential amendment to the Financial Administration Act.

The bill makes several important changes to aspects of ministerial roles and designations. These include the creation of new positions, the removal of several important positions, the creation of legal backup for departmental support for these new mystery positions, and the transfer of authoritative powers.

Government Orders

In the bill, the Liberals are attempting to justify changing the title of ministers of state to full ministers. They say that changing the names of the positions and how much each minister of state earns, with no changes in the responsibilities of ministers of state, somehow makes them equivalent to full ministers.

This is not only disingenuous; it is actually insulting to the ministers of state in question. These ministers of state are fully aware that their responsibilities do not come close to the responsibilities and demands of ministers who have departments, full staff, and deputy ministers in place.

Additionally, Bill C-24 asks Parliament to let the Liberals create three new ministerial-level positions, with portfolios—wait for it—to be determined later. They want us to authorize spending without knowing what the spending will fund. They are asking for a blank cheque. It sounds like a recipe for an even bigger deficit.

A minister of state does not have a deputy minister, does not have a dedicated department, and does not have the sort of budget that accompanies a full ministry. The implication is that the positions are equal because these ministers would have the same type of title and the same salary. This makes the positions appear equivalent on paper, but in reality they are certainly not. The Liberal government should be upfront with its ministers, upfront with its backbench MPs, and most importantly, upfront with Canadians.

On this side of the House, we cannot support these measures. I think the members opposite have not yet realized that we are at a time of out-of-control spending, broken promises on deficits, mounting debt, and complete abandonment of an election promise to balance the budget by 2019. It is time for them to wake up. We are not going to give the government any more blank cheques. Accountability for tax dollars is not just important to Conservatives; it is important to all Canadians.

● (1940)

The real effect of the proposed changes to the Salaries Act goes well beyond increasing salaries; it has everything to do with centralizing spending power in Ottawa and reducing democratic oversight and accountability for spending.

Instead, we need democratic accountability and financially transparent ministers, whose work can be scrutinized at the local level. We do not need an ever bigger, and more centralized government making decisions from Ottawa on behalf of our economically unique and distinct regions.

We do not need unaccountable, unelected political staff, and bureaucrats directing funds for regional development. Instead, we need attentive ministerial oversight on regional spending. We need responsible representation from regional ministers with strong ties to the communities they serve, and to whom they should be accountable.

Canada has historically drawn a distinction between ministers of the crown and ministers of state based on the scope and scale of the work of their portfolios. For example, small businesses and tourism are important components of the Canadian economy. Indeed, they are important enough to warrant a voice at the cabinet table to represent their interests. However, speaking up for small business and tourism during policy discussions in cabinet is not the same as

overseeing a volume of case work, which for example the minister responsible for Service Canada supervises. Nor is it the same as being responsible for the budget overseen by say, the Minister of Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship.

Instead of heading regional development agencies with ministers from regions, the Liberals are handing over significant spending power to unelected civil servants and to one overworked minister from Mississauga. My colleague, the member for Richmond Centre, put it best in her remarks just the other day on this bill. She said:

Here is my own experience. As the minister of state, I had my own team and budget, but I worked closely with the minister of employment. The most notable difference between a minister and a minister of state is that the latter does not have a deputy minister devoted to the file. Additionally, a minister of state does not manage the same departmental budget or have the same authority as a minister.

The Liberals are claiming that the changes in this legislation are just simple changes aimed at addressing equal pay. The reality, however, is that this is just Liberals being Liberals, just like a duck that quacks like a duck and walks like a duck is a duck.

We are always open to hearing ways to make government operate more efficiently. However, removing key regional ministers is a failure to recognize the unique needs of the different regions of our country. The Liberals' top-down approach to governing does not make government more efficient. Rather, it is neglecting the very ones it claims to be helping.

In Canada, it is obvious that there are clear differences among the unique regions of our country, and in order to ensure that we function as a cohesive unit, these regional agencies work to bolster the economies of each distinct part of our country, to essentially ensure that we are greater than the sum of our parts.

I read a report prepared by the Liberal members of the subcommittee on innovation that came out earlier this year. It showed that ACOA was actually observing close to a 12-month delay in seeing some of its innovation grants being approved. It is no wonder that these delays exist, considering that approvals have all been going through the minister from Mississauga.

It is clear. Not only is the government's legislative agenda in complete shambles, its ability to control spending is non-existent, and its rhetoric of a minister is a minister is a minister is simply a smokescreen to try to fool Canadians into thinking that the ministers for sport, small business, and other ministers of state, plus three new mystery ministers, deserve more hard-earned tax dollars that are earned by hard-working Canadians.

In the best interests of all Canadians, this bill deserves to be soundly defeated.

● (1945)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, I always listen to my colleague with great interest. I would like to ask him a very simple question.

Government Orders

Given this bill, which I will refrain from describing seeing as time is running out, I wonder whether the simplest solution the Prime Minister could offer us would not be a good old cabinet shuffle. It would cost nothing and would mean that women could be given ministerial positions with full powers, and honestly, that might also do us some good.

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Madam Speaker, we have been very much aware of the genesis of this bill. It has been pointed out time and time again that in 2015, when the government was elected, it took great pride in the fact that it had a gender balanced cabinet. Then the Liberals suddenly realized, when somebody pointed out to them, that five of the junior ministers were all women, and there were no men among that group. In a last ditch attempt to correct that, the Prime Minister simply announced that they would all be equal. He forgot that they are not all equal.

They do not have departments, they do not have deputy ministers, they have different salaries, and they have huge differences in their workload. This is simply an attempt to correct a previous mistake that the Prime Minister made in haste. It is unfortunate that Canadians are going to be left on the hook to pay for the Prime Minister's mistake.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member and the NDP, working together, have this all wrong. I would suggest that we have two versions of a cabinet. We have Stephen Harper, who had a cabinet of 40 ministers, who saw no benefit with respect to equality among the ministry, among the cabinet, and who saw no benefit in terms of a one-tier cabinet—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, the French interpretation is not working.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The interpretation is not working?

It is working now.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, as I was saying, Stephen Harper had a different type of cabinet. He felt it necessary to have a cabinet that was 25% larger than that of the current government. He felt it necessary to have a male dominated cabinet. He felt it necessary to have a two-tier cabinet.

We currently have a government that is saying that all ministers are equal, and should be treated as such with respect to pay. When they sit around the cabinet table, one that is gender neutral, with as many women as men, Canadians see that as a positive thing. Only the Conservatives and the NDP see that as a negative thing.

I am wondering why the member is stuck on believing that the old Stephen Harper cabinet, which was larger, which cost more money, and which ensured there was more inequity, is better than a cabinet

that has received accolades from every region of this country and beyond.

● (1950)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that when a member has the floor, they need to pay respect to that member. If they have anything to contribute, they can rise and attempt to be recognized to ask questions or make comments.

The hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Madam Speaker, my colleague infers that the idea of having ministers of state and ministers was somehow Stephen Harper's idea. This system has been in place for a long time. All Canadians, other than the Liberals, who are now bent on correcting this mistake that the Prime Minister made, recognize the huge difference in workload. It is one thing for members to sit around the cabinet table and give their input, that is great, but there is a lot more to being a minister than sitting at the cabinet table. To manage a department with a deputy minister and a full complement of staff is a huge responsibility.

My colleagues on this side of the House, who have served in both of those capacities, as ministers of state and full ministers, are insulted by this thinking that a junior minister, a minister of state, would now be artificially elevated to this full minister status.

My colleague talks about the great cabinet that Prime Minister Harper had. I want to congratulate him. I would ask my colleague this. Why in the world would the Prime Minister and the Liberal government not have appointed a minister for seniors at this point, almost two years into their mandate?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise because I am deeply disappointed in what I see in this bill.

When the new cabinet was appointed in 2015, I was disappointed to see that the position of minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec had been abolished. I was extremely disappointed because even though we did not always agree with having the hon. member for Roberval in that role, at least I knew that the people who talked to him about a plan could do so in French and be understood. Now we have a minister who barely speaks any French, who is from Ontario and does not understand the nuances of Quebec, and that is who people have to deal with. In other words, we have a minister in Ontario overseeing the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, who lacks the understanding of the dynamics—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Madam Speaker, would you check to see if we have quorum at this point in the deliberations.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have quorum.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Madam Speaker, one of the problems with having a minister from Ontario oversee the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec is that he does not understand the dynamics of Quebec and how it is the only province where we cannot negotiate directly with municipalities. Agreements need to be reached with the Government of Quebec. As a result of the minister's lack of understanding on this, Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec programs are not going so well.

The bill proposes simply to abolish the position. First the government appoints a minister from Ontario and then it insults Quebecers by telling them that not only is a minister from Ontario going to take care of their province's economic development, but after that the position will simply cease to exist.

This does not make sense to me. I believe that we absolutely must go back to the arrangement where the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec was the responsibility of a Quebec minister or a minister representing this region. I believe that we must absolutely go back to that.

One thing is for sure: this provision alone is reason enough for me to oppose the bill. Not only does this make absolutely no sense, but ministers of state will now be paid the same as ministers, even if they do not have the same duties, responsibilities or officials to manage.

Why are they doing this? In truth, it is not out of fairness, but simply to correct the mistake that the Prime Minister made when he unveiled his original cabinet. It is all well and good to say that a gender parity in cabinet has been achieved because there are as many women as there are men; nonetheless there is still the issue of the responsibilities given to the women. That was problematic from the very beginning.

The six most important positions in cabinet, apart from the Prime Minister, are the following: the Minister of Public Safety, a man; the Minister of Foreign Affairs, a man, Stéphane Dion, when the Prime Minister formed his cabinet in 2015; the President of the Treasury Board, a man; the Minister of Finance, a man; the Minister of National Defence, a man; and the Minister of Justice, a woman. Of the six most important positions in the Government of Canada, there was originally only one woman. A cabinet shuffle rectified this. Now, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is a woman, because they decided to send Mr. Dion abroad. There is that at least, but there is still no gender balance when it comes to the six most important positions.

There are three House officer positions. When the cabinet was formed after the election, in 2015, the chief whip was a man, the member for Orléans; the Leader of the Government in the House was a man, big surprise, the name of his riding escapes me, but he is the current Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard. Lastly, there is obviously the leader, a man; the caucus chair, although chosen by the caucus, not the Prime Minister, is also a man. Originally, the House officers were men.

The Prime Minister made a mistake. For him, gender balance is as easy as putting 15 people on one side and 15 people on the other.

However, we must never forget about the responsibilities that are given to women.

Madam Speaker, your title is the assistant deputy speaker. I do not believe that you would expect to have the same salary as the Speaker of the House, because you do not have the same duties or responsibilities. However, we recognize your role and importance. The House held an election. We have to stop thinking that, for true fairness to come about, all it takes is to give everyone the same pay. Equality must also involve the responsibilities given to people. That is the problem we have at the moment.

● (1955)

The government did not decide to create departments and expand job descriptions so that ministers of state would be ministers in their own right who deserved the same salary. No one can tell me that the Minister of Sport and the Minister of National Defence deserve the same salary because their responsibilities, at least as they stand now, are completely different. Just think about their budgets and how many public servants they have working for them. It is obvious that they are not the same at all.

Let us also remember that there are many qualified women that the Prime Minister could have appointed. He could have made different choices. For example, the member for Vancouver Centre has been here since 1993. She has been in the House longer than any other female MP. However, the Prime Minister chose to appoint other people. Those are his personal choices. The member for Kanata—Carleton has a great deal of experience as a member of the military. The Prime Minister could have appointed her to be the defence minister instead of the member for Vancouver South, but he did not.

Now the Prime Minister needs to take responsibility for his decisions. He is the one who appointed his cabinet as he saw fit and created the inequality in the duties and responsibilities entrusted to women. The solution is simple, and it is not a bill to change people's salaries, but rather a cabinet shuffle.

If the Prime Minister would like, we could name some ministers who were so-so, such as the Minister of National Defence who decided to take credit for the success of an operation. The Prime Minister could put a woman in that position. Only once in the history of Canada have we had a woman defence minister, namely, Kim Campbell, who was appointed to the position following the massacre in Rwanda because it looked better to have a woman managing such a file.

After thinking things through over the summer, the Prime Minister could decide to appoint a woman defence minister. In fact, if he were to do so, it would bring some balance to the six top posts in the Government of Canada. There would be three women and three men, so that would be an improvement. However, he could do even better and be even more ground-breaking by appointing a woman finance minister. That has never been done before. He could decide to do that.

Government Orders

Rather than trying to have its bill adopted by force, by using time allocation motions, he should simply use the good old method of a cabinet shuffle, reflect on the ways he wants to distribute additional tasks, and ensure that women have real leadership roles in the Canadian government, instead of trying to raise their salaries and minimize the mistake he made when he put together a cabinet that has equal representation solely in terms of numbers, and not in terms of responsibilities.

I hope that the Prime Minister will seriously consider my question, ask that Bill C-24 be withdrawn, and do what everyone would do: shuffle the cabinet to rebalance the distribution of responsibilities between the men and women in his cabinet.

• (2000)

[*English*]

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned the most important positions, and I am wondering how she came to the conclusion that those were the most important positions. For me, health is one of the most important positions, and it is held by a woman. Labour is an important position, and it is held by a woman. International development is an important position, and it is held by a woman. How does she determine the most important positions?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Madam Speaker, those positions are important in Canada because of our constitutional system.

At present, health is primarily managed by the provinces. For that reason, the role of the Minister of Health at the federal level is a little less important than the role of the Minister of National Defence, for example, since health budgets are managed primarily by the provinces. In the case of labour, 90% of employees in Canada fall under provincial jurisdiction rather than under federal jurisdiction.

When I talk about the six key positions, they are the ones that journalists and Canadians are most interested in when there is a cabinet shuffle. They are also the six ministers that people are most often familiar with. There is a good chance that people know who the Minister of Finance is, but when it comes to International Cooperation, for example, even though I would like it to be otherwise, people have a lot more trouble giving us a name.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (2005)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind members that instead of yelling out, if they would like to stand and contribute to the discussion, they can do so. It would be a much more proper way of doing things here in the House.

[*Translation*]

We will continue with questions and comments. The hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I entirely agree with her. Pretending that we have parity in a photograph is not going to give us true parity in the

government. A minister of state and a minister are not the same thing. They do not have the same responsibilities.

Would raising the salary of a minister of state and making it equivalent to a minister's salary actually mean that the ministers are "of lower quality"?

A minister's responsibilities are different from those of a minister of state. They seem to be telling Canadians that a minister is no longer as important as before.

Ms. Christine Moore: Madam Speaker, when a minister of state is given a more important portfolio because he does good work, that is a promotion. People are motivated by greater responsibility and higher pay. Very motivated, in fact.

I am sure that if a minister of the Francophonie were offered a ministerial position with a whole department to look after, she would be pleased. If we pass this bill, there goes that motivation. People will simply be told that they have more duties, more responsibilities, and a whole lot more people to manage, but cannot expect a pay raise for it.

Is it motivating to get a promotion that is not really a promotion because the government says all ministers are equal?

That is not very motivating. We need two different pay grades for ministers of state and ministers because their jobs are really very different.

If the government decided to completely change the job description for ministers of state and give them a department and a budget, then maybe it would make sense, but that is not how things are right now, and that is not the way things are going.

We need to maintain these distinctions for now. I encourage the Prime Minister to appoint more female ministers. If he needs help with that, I myself can give him a little advice about some outstanding women in his cabinet who could replace a few of the men who have been doing a lacklustre job.

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak to Bill C-24. I find it absolutely amazing, and it really speaks to the contempt that the Liberal Party has for this hallowed place of Parliament, that when members are speaking and members on the opposite side do not agree with the position of the opposition, which is really the job of the opposition, to hold the government to account, that gang over there starts chirping at members on this side. It is quite funny to see.

Leave it to the Prime Minister to waste Parliament's time in dealing with this piece of legislation, not unlike the changes to the election financing bill that is being proposed by the government. The government creates legislation, in this case breaking its own rules, and now has to bring legislation to the House to keep itself in line. It is absolutely ridiculous. We are now dealing with a bill, Bill C-24, that the Prime Minister created when he created his cabinet. I agree with the member who sits beside me that this is a complete waste of government and parliamentary time.

Government Orders

Let us look at what Bill C-24 would do. It would allow for the creation of eight new Liberal ministerial positions, including three Liberal ministers who are yet to be named. When I think of ministers yet to be named, it is almost as if the Liberals have become general managers of a hockey team. They are making trades, and part of the deal is for a player to be named later or future considerations. It just does not make any sense.

Liberals are asking us to vote on something that is not even defined. They tell us to trust them. Canadians are surely starting to learn what trusting the Liberals means. What is the potential of these new ministerial positions? They have not told us in this piece of legislation. Maybe they are looking at creating a ministry of social media. Who knows? We all know that the Prime Minister has an affinity for social media. In fact, I would suggest that the Prime Minister believes more in Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram than he does in showing up in this place. Maybe there will be a minister of blaming others and accepting no responsibility. Maybe that is one of the ministries they will look at creating later on. Maybe there will be a minister of taking care of Liberal friends, families, donors, partisans, hacks, and cronies. Who knows? We do not know, because it is not defined in the legislation.

The interesting thing with the creation of ministries is that it also comes, potentially, with dollars. We are being asked to vote on something that is not defined within this legislation, that could potentially cost Canadian taxpayers millions of dollars, and the other side expects us to support this. How ridiculous is that? It just does not make any sense.

Another thing this bill would do is formally eliminate the positions of the former government's six regional development agency ministers. That is an important point. The government, effectively, wants to consolidate all of these regions into one centralized area, the greater Toronto area, and that would cause problems for a lot of reasons. Hopefully, if I have enough time, I will speak to some of the concerns within Atlantic Canada. Quite frankly, it is surprising to me that Atlantic Canadian members of Parliament are not enraged by this. We are certainly hearing opposition from those in the west that this would be consolidated in Toronto and some of the problems that would create. Probably the only advantage is that Pearson airport is nearby and people could get there easily.

Each regional development office had the expertise. The government would be forcing those regional investors to make their way to Toronto to deal with the minister responsible for ACOA, for example.

● (2010)

Again, it does not make any sense. When there is regional representation and there are boots on the ground, they are able to deal with businesses and individuals in those areas. It creates better efficiency. It allows the lines of communication to be open. One would think that the Liberal members from Atlantic Canada in particular would be outraged by what is going on.

The big thing in the bill is the increase in the salaries of the ministers. On the surface, that might not seem like much. Again, this is a problem created by the Prime Minister when he decided that he was going to have a gender-equal cabinet. I guess someone in the Prime Minister's Office raised the fact that he made a mistake,

because he named them to the positions, but the positions did not go with the salaries of cabinet ministers. Why should they? When we look at the responsibilities of the health minister and the Minister of National Defence, and I know this has been brought up, these are responsibilities that have tremendous budgets. Tremendous numbers of people work in those departments. The responsibility assumed by those ministers should be paid commensurate with those responsibilities. In the private sector, payment is commensurate with the amount of responsibility individuals have.

The Prime Minister, by moving toward this gender equity situation, has created this problem for himself. Here we are tonight, spending Parliament's valuable time, late at night, to push through this piece of legislation the Liberals want to create this equity.

One of the things that has impressed me the most since I became a member of Parliament, particularly on our side of the House, is the strength of the females in our caucus. I would put every single one of our females up against any male in this Parliament, and I would put them on the front benches, not based on gender equity but based on their capability and their ability to perform. Since I became a member of Parliament, I have been impressed by the strength of the women in our caucus. I have said that publicly a number of times.

To conclude, this is a complete and utter waste of Parliament's time. It is a problem that was created by the Prime Minister, and here we are as a Parliament trying to fix this problem, a problem that did not need to happen. I will not be supporting this, and I know that other members of our caucus feel the same way.

● (2015)

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to say to my hon. colleague across the way that I am very impressed that he has found religion when it comes to decorum in the House. I look forward to the improved decorum in this place, especially in question period. Maybe he can speak to some of his colleagues with regard to their heckling behaviour in the House, which for the last two years, I have been very disappointed to see.

The member is talking about the qualifications of the women in his caucus, and I would agree—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I again want to remind the members that someone has the floor, and there should not be any bickering back and forth. If other members want to contribute to the discussion, they should hold themselves back for a few minutes, and wait until the question has been answered, and then they will have an opportunity to ask the question if they stand and wish to do so.

The hon. member for Cambridge.

Mr. Bryan May: Madam Speaker, my question is with respect to qualifications. The member was referring to how he would have women on the front bench based on their qualifications. I wonder if he could elaborate on the concerns he has about the amazing women we have in caucus and which ones he does not think are qualified to be in those roles.

Government Orders

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, if we look at what has gone on over the last couple of years in this place, and the utter contempt it seems the Prime Minister, the Liberal Party, and those within the PMO have for Parliament, if truth be told, what they want is an audience, not an opposition.

With respect to the gender question, it is not an issue of gender parity or gender equality. It is about putting the most qualified person in a position. If that means 30 women are capable, and I believe many of them are in this place, of filling all 30 positions in that front row, then they should. It is not an issue of gender parity. It is an issue of gender strength. It does not matter whether it is a female or a male. It is about putting the best person in the job to serve Canadians. That is what it is all about to me.

• (2020)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, we often talk about the Ottawa bubble, and I have the impression that we have a particularly clear example here this evening of a situation that almost no one in this country can relate to.

Throughout my colleague's speech, I tried to set politics aside to come up with a comparable situation, and I automatically thought back to when I sat on a board of directors, as many of my colleagues probably have. I imagined the CEO coming to us, the board, and saying that he needed more money to hire three new employees, that he did not yet know what those three employees would do, but he needed them and knew that they would be paid the same salary as him.

My first reaction would be to wonder whether our CEO was in over his head, and whether he was the right person for the job.

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, for 10 years I sat on Barrie city council. I sat on the finance committee. I was also the chair of transportation and economic development. Had the chief administrative officer, the CAO, come to us on the council and said that she wanted to hire three more people, there would have been not just a job description but a qualifications sheet created, which we would have made the decision on.

What the Liberals are proposing in this piece of legislation is to have us vote to create three new mystery cabinet positions, without qualifying or quantifying what it is they will be doing. I would have laughed at my CAO at Barrie city council had she come to me and suggested that we hire without knowing what it was we would be hiring them for. It is utterly ridiculous.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-24. There are a number of significant problems with what I would call the laughable bill that is before the House today, and I wish to bring some attention to those.

There are three main problems I wish to address. First, the bill would delete the role of regional development ministers, thereby leaving economic development in Atlantic Canada, western Canada, and northern Canada in the hands of a minister in Toronto. That seems rather unfair. Second, Bill C-24 lacks transparency by allowing the government to appoint three mystery ministers. Third, the Liberals claim to be taking a stand for women with the legislation

by creating a cabinet that upholds so-called gender parity, but in fact, that is not the case, and I wish to explore that further.

With regard to regional representation, as Canadians we should strive to work together for equality while also embracing diversity. Our diversity, of course, is what makes us unique as a country. We celebrate what western Canada has to offer. We celebrate what Atlantic Canada has to offer. We celebrate what the north has to offer and what eastern Canada and central Canada have to offer. Bill C-24 provides a threat not only to the feminist movement but to our way of life as a diverse and beautiful people.

The bill aims to eliminate the positions of our former government's six regional development agency ministers. The elimination of these positions would remove the ability of the different regions across Canada to be accurately represented in government. The Liberals continue to say that they want to work with the provinces and municipalities, yet in the bill, they are trying to remove cabinet voices that represent specific regions, such as western Canada, Atlantic Canada, and the north. This action shows the insensitivity of the Liberals toward national issues and having those issues voiced at the cabinet table.

I believe that our country has different cultures, industries, and issues that in each region need to be treated with unique care. Of course, the bill would prevent that from being the case. Traditionally, regional development agency ministers brought their regions' issues to Parliament to ensure accurate representation, but as I said, this bill would gut that opportunity.

I would also like to speak to the bill's lack of transparency. It seems that the Liberals are just demanding a blank cheque. They are not willing to tell us, as members of Parliament, where this money would go or which ministers they would appoint. We are told that there would be three mysterious ministers and ministries that would be created through the bill, and taxpayer money would go to that.

What are the Liberals hiding, and why are they not being transparent with us and with the Canadian public with regard to their plans in going ahead and creating these ministries?

There is absolutely no way that I, nor I believe any members on this side of the House, are going to vote for a piece of legislation that demands a blank cheque with no accountability, no transparency, and no honesty. That is not good governance, and I will not stand for that.

Moving on to the third problem in the bill, I would like to talk about its impact on women. When it comes to changing the salaries of ministers of state, I have to boldly contend that Bill C-24 is nothing more than a slap-dash attempt to cover up for the Liberals' media embarrassment.

Government Orders

The Prime Minister announced his cabinet. He announced that due to his quota system, gender parity had all of a sudden been achieved. There had been some sort of arrival that had been granted to the Liberal Party of Canada. The media was quick to pick up on this and to note that this was not in fact the case. There were actually several ministers of state, all of whom were women. Women were being placed in positions with less authority, less responsibility, and smaller budgets than where their male counterparts were being placed. This revealed the inequality in the Prime Minister's cabinet appointments.

● (2025)

We know ministers of state earn less money and they have fewer responsibilities than ministers. Even though it was clear that a couple of ministries had already been made up to achieve gender parity, it still ended up that female ministers were earning less than their male colleagues. The quota system, with its contrived gender parity, severely damaged the credibility of these women.

I believe the bill does an incredible disservice to the women of the House and to the women of Canada as well, because we do serve as role models. It is tokenism at its finest and, as a woman, I am offended by what the Prime Minister has done.

As a strong, intelligent, and hard-working woman, I want to be entrusted with responsibilities and granted a voice at the cabinet table, not based on my genitalia but based on my ability and not according to anything other than that. I want my salary to match the work I do and the responsibilities I carry within this place. Changing the pay system would not in fact create equality, but it would create even greater inequality.

Women have shown they can climb any ladder in Canada that they choose to, whether it be in business, politics, or academia. Overlooking this achievement by trying to legislate equality is an injustice to the many women who have fought, and who continue to fight, to gain pay equality for equal work.

From its inception, the Conservative Party of Canada has modelled quite well what it is to put women in strategic places of leadership and to do so based on their abilities. The Conservative Party had the first female prime minister, the Right Hon. Kim Campbell, which the current Prime Minister appears to have forgotten. Therefore, I will remind the House that there has been a female prime minister, that she did exist.

In addition to that, the Conservatives also put in place the first female cabinet minister in Canada's history, under Prime Minister Diefenbaker. The Conservative Party continues to champion strong women in politics. I am here today on this side of the House as a proud Conservative member. I am treated incredibly well by both female and male colleagues. I have never been made to feel less than them. In fact, I am celebrated because of what I bring to the table. That is the way it is supposed to be.

Let me draw attention to the member for Sturgeon River—Parkland. She is a prime example of what it is to be a strong and capable woman within the political realm. Before becoming the interim leader of the Conservative Party, she held a number of cabinet posts. During her time as a member of Parliament, she has raised awareness for crimes committed against women and girls

through her private member's bill, the just act. She has boosted support for girls by championing the internationally recognized International Day of the Girl through the UN. She implemented several high-profile health initiatives as the minister of health. The member has also shown Canada that women can accomplish exactly what they set their mind to without government creating quotas or making special accommodations for them.

We do need to pursue true equality, but not this fake equality or so-called equality that the Liberals are trying to push forward in their agenda. As for me, a middle-aged white guy, with so-called great hair, does not get to tell me my value, my worth, my dignity or my ability.

There is much to be considered when we look at Bill C-24. We must fight for Canada's future as a nation that values hard work and equality, not just equality on paper but honest equality that is seen in real life. In Canada, women are given the ability to work to accomplish the same things as their male counterparts, an opportunity that cannot be overlooked if we value the future of our women.

Instead of a gender quota system, the Prime Minister could have appointed based on merit and probably could have achieved much the same thing. If he had done this, he would have given credit where credit was due and he would have contended for the equality and the value of women. That is the type of prime minister I would like to see our country have. He or she is still to come.

● (2030)

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am shocked that the member opposite would suggest that these appointments were not merit based. My question is based on a couple of points.

The Minister of Science has 90 universities, over 200 colleges, and a budget of \$10 billion. The Minister of International Development has a budget of \$5 billion. Though the Conservatives may be shocked from the previous 10 years, it is an important part of our foreign policy.

Is this less authority? At what threshold do these ministers become important?

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, I am not sure why the member opposite is yelling at me. I do not know why he feels the need to raise his voice. Perhaps it is because I am a woman.

An hon. member: Mansplaining.

An hon. member: Wow.

An hon. member: Wow is right, bud.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is too much going back and forth in the House right now, and too many comments. I would again remind the members of a rule in the House that when someone has the floor, he or she should have the respect of all members in the House to allow the member to answer. If members have anything to contribute to the discussion, either by comment or question, they can take their opportunity to stand and be recognized in the House.

Government Orders

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, what I talked about was with regard to equal treatment of women. Every woman deserves the same pay as a man if she does the same job as a man. I believe in equal pay for equal work. That should be upheld in this place and in the whole country, from coast to coast.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is becoming increasingly clear that the solution to the problem the Prime Minister created himself is a cabinet shuffle, not a bill.

I am wondering if my colleague could name any men in cabinet who have not been living up to expectations, who could be assigned other duties, so that the Prime Minister could hand those portfolios over to women ministers, after thinking about it over the summer.

• (2035)

[*English*]

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, I could draw on a number of examples where male ministers have been put in place and have not upheld the role and responsibilities they had been granted. I do not wish to draw attention to those things right now. It is beyond what we are talking about today.

The point I am really hoping to make is that regardless if one is male or female, gender really should not be brought into account. Ministers are given a list of responsibilities, a list of tasks, a budget to oversee, a staff to manage, and they need to do that with competence.

Whether male or female, if the person has the ability to do it, is the best person for the job, then that individual should be put into the cabinet post to do that job.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member talked about how she felt as a woman and how well respected and well treated she was within her party. Then she referred to women on this side of the House as quotas, and I have heard other members refer to them as tokens. Does that respect not go right across the floor? Should all women and men in the House not be respected? I am not feeling we are getting that tonight.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, yes, the members opposite do deserve to be respected. That was exactly why I said what I did. They should not be treated as an opportunity for quota. They should not be treated as tokens. They should be treated as equal partners in leading Canadians. They should be treated as people who are intelligent, hard working, and able to contribute based on their merits and abilities rather than based on their gender.

That is what I experience on this side of the House. I wish the same for them.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to the next speaker, I know people are questioning how questions are being allocated.

On November 3, 2016, the Deputy Speaker indicated:

...time for questions and comments is often the most valuable time for an exchange between members. In accordance with the procedures and practices, we will do our best to ensure that time is generally afforded to the members of the

parties who are not associated with the member who has just spoken but not to the exclusion of that party...

Generally in a 10-minute round there is an opportunity for a question to be asked to the same party, unless nobody else is getting up. Because the member was from the Conservative Party, the decision to allow the questions from the other parties to question the member was how it was afforded.

[*Translation*]

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is a rather special evening. I have worked hard in life to get to where I am today. I have never been singled out for anything because of my name or gender. I have always tried to get jobs because I was good at what I did, not because I am a woman. The problem I have is with the parts of the bill that talk about parity. For me, that does not mean appointing the same number of women as men.

For me, parity is about action. Parity is not just taking a nice photo with 15 men on one side and 15 women on the other, while the rest of the time the men are telling those women to shut up and look pretty. That is not what parity means to me.

I have a problem with this bill because it would mean giving the Liberals a blank cheque. We would be telling them that we agree that they should appoint people, three ministers, without even knowing what their titles will be. Meanwhile, you are causing our regions to empty out. Everywhere—

• (2040)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Members must address their comments to the Chair. I simply want to inform the member that she has only three minutes remaining.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Madam Speaker, they are gutting our regions. We had regional ministers who were up to date on what was happening in our regions. Now, we are left with one minister from Toronto. If I talk about a salmon river in Charlevoix, I hope he knows that I am talking about salmon because I am not sure he has travelled very far in Charlevoix.

That is where I have a problem: they are robbing Peter to pay Paul, to make a cute photo, but doing so creates inequality. Our regions are being deprived of ministers who need to be in our regions.

Whether it is in the regions of Quebec, of the Atlantic or of Newfoundland, they are regions. Now, there is just one minister responsible for them. He is in Toronto, and while he certainly may travel, he is not familiar with the regions.

I was looking at the current cabinet list and there are very few people from the regions. Most of them are from urban areas. That means that our regions have been forgotten.

Government Orders

I have nothing against gender equality. I have nothing against equal pay for equal work. A minister of state and a minister do not have the same responsibilities. If we support Bill C-24, not only will ministers and ministers of state be equal, but everyone will ask for equal pay. All the members, critics, and the opposition will want the same salary as those opposite. We will have parity.

As women—I am not minimizing the role of women, far from it—we have already been in government and we had the ear of our prime minister. Today, I will tell you that I am going to vote against this bill, because it is an empty shell.

We are giving the Liberals a blank cheque and we do not know what they want to do with it. There have already been enough scandals on that side of the House. We do not want more of them. The Liberals are still giving money to their friends who do good work for the Liberals, but not necessarily for Canadians.

We are all different in the House: there are Conservatives, NDP members, Liberals, those in the Bloc, the Green Party. However, when we come to the House, we speak for all Canadians; we are not supposed to be partisan.

Today opposition members are being asked to vote on a bill on pay equity for positions with entirely different responsibilities. Pay equity is equal pay for equal work with the same responsibilities. A minister of state and a minister are not the same things. I would hope that women are not being appointed to these positions to fill some sort of quota to achieve parity. It is insulting to women to say that a position is vacant and needs to be filled by a woman to make the pictures look good.

I have never been superficial and I am not going to start now. I am here because I am a woman of character and I can go wherever I want by opening the doors that I want. I will never say “because I am a woman”. I am here because I am qualified to be here.

• (2045)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 8:44 p.m., pursuant to order made on Wednesday, June 7, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made Tuesday, May 30, the recorded division stands deferred until Monday, June 12, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

* * *

[*English*]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.) moved that Bill C-50, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (political financing), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Madam Speaker, it is a great pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill C-50, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act, regarding political financing, which would amend the Canada Elections Act to create an unprecedented level of openness and transparency for political fundraising events.

I first want to recognize my officials for their extraordinary effort in developing, drafting, and refining this important legislation. I thank them for their hard work over the past few months. They are a credit to our public service.

Our government told Canadians we would set a higher bar on the transparency, accountability, and integrity of our public institutions and the democratic process. We have also sent a clear message that we want to encourage Canadians to embrace our democracy.

I have been focused, in particular, on this latter objective since the Prime Minister asked me to be Canada's Minister of Democratic Institutions. This is why our government has moved on several fronts to enshrine a more open and inclusive democracy. We have changed the way we appoint senators and judges, we are making our elections more accessible and inclusive, and we are taking steps to protect our democracy from cyber-threats. We take these actions because we know how deeply Canadians value and cherish our democracy.

As we celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation this year, we can reflect on the work of past generations that have improved, strengthened, and protected Canadian democracy. The challenge facing us is how we, as parliamentarians, can continue to lead this work and fulfill the promise of a strong, stable, vibrant democracy.

[*Translation*]

The simple but important act of voting is a central part of this discussion. Casting a ballot is a rite of passage in this country. I am sure that many hon. members recall going with their parents to a polling station. Many members will recall bringing their own children with them to vote at their local school, church, community centre, or in one of the many other locations where voting takes place.

In many respects, election day is one of the last true civic rituals that Canadians take part in. It is a day on which we all come together to take part in the democratic process. We wait in the same lines, we follow the same rules, and we exercise the same rights and freedoms.

Government Orders

Today, as Minister of Democratic Institutions, I have a mandate to protect and improve one of the greatest democracies on earth. It is an honour to talk about this in one of the most respected democratic institutions in the world. We know that democracy does not just happen on its own. We all need to contribute to it, and that means more than just voting every four years. Democracy requires our constant attention.

● (2050)

[*English*]

There are many different ways Canadians choose to make a valuable contribution to our democracy. It could be as simple as engaging in a public policy discussion with a friend, joining a community group, participating in a demonstration, or volunteering with a charity. It could also include joining a political party, making a donation to a party, or attending a political fundraiser. Democratic participation and civic engagement are critical to a healthy democracy.

While we believe that we could always do more to raise the bar on openness and transparency in political fundraising, we also respect the right of all Canadians to choose to financially support a party of their choice.

[*Translation*]

We are celebrating the 35th anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms this year. Section 3 of that charter guarantees every citizen the right to vote and to run in a federal election. Section 3 is closely linked to the protection of the freedom of association, which is also provided for in the charter.

Today in Canada, Canadians and permanent residents have the legitimate right to make a donation to a party and to participate in fundraising activities. All parties of the House receive support for the honest work that they do through the donations and contributions of individuals who believe in and support their work.

It is important to take a step back and look at Canada's political fundraising system as it now stands, even before the changes we are discussing. The Canada Elections Act sets out the legal framework that governs fundraising and campaign financing, and all registered federal political parties are subject to it.

According to Elections Canada, disclosure requirements have existed for candidates since the beginning of the 20th century, but the current regime was essentially laid out with the introduction of political party registration in 1970 and the Election Expenses Act in 1974. Essentially, there have been limits on contribution amounts and on the people through whom Canadians can make donations to federal political parties for the past 43 years.

[*English*]

Today, only individual Canadians and permanent residents can donate. Companies, industry associations, and trade unions cannot give funds to any politician or political party. There is a strict limit on individual contributions. Annually, individuals can donate up to \$1,550 to a national political party. They can also donate up to \$1,550, combined, to all the riding associations, candidates, or nomination contestants of a party. Finally, if their preferred party is

in a leadership contest, an individual can donate up to \$1,550, combined, to all the leadership contestants in a leadership race.

Today, there are already a number of different reports and requirements that parties, electoral district associations, candidates, leadership contestants, and others must complete. Elections Canada publishes all financial reports, as well as the identity and postal codes of those donating more than \$200 on its website.

It is also important to note that there are strict penalties under the Canada Elections Act to punish anyone violating political financing rules. The penalties could include fines of up to \$50,000, or up to five years in jail, or both. Canadians take political fundraising seriously. There are serious consequences for breaking these rules.

● (2055)

[*Translation*]

It is important to point out that 2% of Canadians are currently members of a party or have made a campaign donation. Not everyone wants to join a political party, but everyone can celebrate the contribution that political parties make to our democracy. These institutions bring together people from across the country, people with diverse perspectives, opinions, backgrounds, and experiences. Some parties might focus on specific issues or concerns, while others might seek to cover a broad range of opinions.

At best, parties can mobilize many people and encourage them to take action on important causes, champion certain ideas, and work hard to convince other people to join them.

[*English*]

Political parties are vital to the discourse that we have in Canada about our democracy. To quote former Supreme Court justice Frank Iacobucci:

Political parties provide individual citizens with an opportunity to express an opinion on the policy and functioning of government.

They are capable of introducing unique concerns into the political discourse. In order to participate in political discourse, parties require funding to operate. As Canadians, we have the right to contribute to a political party that shares our ideals and our aspirations. For many, contributing to a political party and attending a fundraising event is a valued form of democratic expression, and I know all hon. members agree that this is an important right we must continue to respect and uphold.

[*Translation*]

I believe that a strong democracy does not merely tolerate the exchange of ideas, but rather encourages it. A healthy democracy fosters lively partisan debate that offers ideas and clear choices to people. Canadians can choose to donate to a political party to show their support for that kind of democratic debate. In Bill C-50, we are proposing that people continue to make donations to political parties and do so in a way that is more open and transparent than ever.

Government Orders

[English]

If passed, Bill C-50 would provide Canadians with more information about political fundraising events than ever before. It would make our already strong and robust system for political financing even more open and transparent, so that Canadians can continue to have confidence in our democratic institutions. It would ensure that Canadians know who is going to fundraisers, when and where they are happening, and the amount required to attend.

[Translation]

If passed, Bill C-50 will apply to all fundraising activities that cabinet members, party leaders, and leadership candidates take part in when the ticket price is over \$200. This will apply only to parties sitting in the House of Commons. The bill will therefore apply to all of Canada's political leaders, across party lines. These are the people who are leading our country and aspire to become prime minister themselves.

[English]

Fundraising events involving these individuals would be advertised at least five days in advance. Canadians would know about them before these events take place, giving them an opportunity to inquire about a ticket, if they wish. They would know exactly where and when a fundraiser is happening, who is organizing the event, and which senior political leader or leaders will attend.

Further improving openness and transparency for our political leaders will enhance the trust that Canadians have in our democracy across the political spectrum, and we believe this is a good thing.

[Translation]

Public disclosure of fundraising details offers the added benefit of providing that information to the media, leaving it up to the press whether to cover it or not. I believe, and our government believes, that a free press is essential to our democracy and that a healthy media landscape is necessary for a healthy democracy. Our approach in Bill C-50 is to provide journalists the information they need to choose whether to cover an activity or not and give the political parties the flexibility to set their own rules for providing media access and accreditation.

[English]

Political parties would also be required to report the names and addresses of those who attended the fundraiser, within 30 days, to Elections Canada. This information would be published online. Canadians and the media would know who attended a fundraiser, and could hold politicians and attendees more accountable for their actions.

Elections Canada, as the recipient and publisher of so much fundraising information already, is the natural place to collect this new information. Publishing all the information in one non-partisan place would make it easier for Canadians to search for this information. I should add that certain individuals, such as minors, service staff, and volunteers, would be exempt.

The bill would also create a new Elections Act offence for not respecting these rules. Any penalties would be borne by political parties, not the senior political leaders invited to attend the events. The maximum fine we propose for violating the provisions would be

\$1,000 on summary conviction, and any party that breaks the rules would also have to return the contributions collected at the events.

● (2100)

[Translation]

If passed, Bill C-50 will fulfill our government's promise to make Canada's political financing system much more transparent to the public and the media. This is one of many ways our government is improving, enhancing, and protecting our democratic institutions.

Members of the House know that we also introduced Bill C-33, which, if passed, would repeal undemocratic aspects of what the previous government called the Fair Elections Act. Bill C-33 would make it easier for Canadians to exercise their right to vote. It would also encourage voter turnout, and enhance the public's trust in our electoral system as well as its integrity.

To that end, significant measures will be taken, such as allowing the Chief Electoral Officer to accept voter cards as identification and re-establishing vouching so that eligible voters without identification can prove their identity and place of residence by asking another voter to vouch for them.

Moreover, under the bill, Elections Canada could register young Canadians 14 to 17 to include them in the electoral process at a younger age.

Those are just some examples of the measures our government is taking to ensure that we continue to enhance democratic institutions.

[English]

We have also introduced a new merit-based Senate appointments process, as I mentioned. To meet the expectations of Canadians, we developed a process to appoint senators that is more open and transparent than ever before. We established an advisory board for Senate appointments and launched a new, open, non-partisan application process. Now any Canadian can directly apply to become a senator, and since spring 2016, we have appointed 27 senators through this new process. The Senate is an important institution in our democratic system, and our government remains committed to building a more effective and less partisan Senate in partnership with hon. senators and all parliamentarians.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the procedure and House affairs committee, as well as the Senate legal and constitutional affairs committee. Both of these committees have been studying the Chief Electoral Officer's report on the 2015 election and will be reporting their recommendations to their respective chambers. Their guidance will be incredibly helpful, as I work with all of our colleagues to continue the important work of improving, strengthening, and protecting our democratic institutions. Bill C-50 is an important example of how we can continue to raise the bar when it comes to our democracy.

Government Orders

Samara Canada recently released a report entitled, “Democracy 360: The Second Report Card on How Canadians Communicate, Participate and Lead in Politics.” The report measures the health of Canada’s democracy across 19 different indicators. According to Samara, 71% of Canadians said they are fairly satisfied or very satisfied with how democracy works in Canada. This is six percentage points higher than the first report card in 2015.

[Translation]

Although this report suggests that Canadians have confidence in their democracy, we realize that there is always room for improvement. We therefore introduced Bill C-50 for more open and transparent fundraising activities.

We are shining a light on these types of activities so that Canadians can know and understand what is happening. We are providing them with information on who attends these fundraisers, when and where they are taking place, and how much it costs to participate.

[English]

Political fundraising is an important form of democratic expression. Fundraisers are an opportunity for groups of like-minded Canadians to come together and discuss values, opinions, and policy ideas. They also provide Canadians with the opportunity to support a party or individual with whom they share similar perspectives and ideas. We believe it is important to clarify what happens at these fundraising events. Bill C-50 would do so by shining a light on who is attending political fundraisers, where and when they are taking place, and the amount required to attend them. For the first time in Canadian history, our government is legislating and requiring political parties to disclose this information, because Canadians have a right to know even more than they do now about political fundraising events. I think all members of this House can agree that political parties do not have anything to hide. Bill C-50 would ensure that more information than ever before about political fundraisers is shared with the media and the public at large, so that Canadians can continue to have confidence in our democracy.

I am eager to hear the opinions from other members of this House about the bill itself. This is important legislation that affects all of us in this chamber, and I am confident that the hon. members share my desire to provide Canadians with more information about political fundraising events. I look forward to the debate ahead.

• (2105)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in June, typically we sit late to deal with very important legislation like budget implementation acts, and gender equity, which we have not talked about yet, Bill S-3, that has come from the Senate. Instead tonight, we are sitting here until midnight dealing with two problems that the Prime Minister created himself. We just finished debating one bill in terms of how he had to create equity among his ministers because he said he would have an equitable minister situation, but he actually did not.

We are now debating a bill about political fundraising that is a problem he created but he has not fixed with the bill. It is a bit of razzle-dazzle to say we are going to be more open and transparent, but the bottom line is that he is still going to have those cash-for-access fundraisers, and that is what the problem was.

I can say with certainty that former prime minister Stephen Harper never had cash-for-access fundraisers. If there were ever a time when ministers by mistake ended up at an event with stakeholders, they immediately left and paid back the money.

The Liberals have been shameful in their cash for access, and they have introduced the bill and are trying to bamboozle the public by saying they are doing a better job and are going to be open and transparent. They have not fixed the problem, and they should be ashamed.

Hon. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in the speech, the bill is about making fundraising more open and transparent. It is precisely about providing more information to the public with regard to political fundraising. All members in the House know that political parties need funds to operate. All members in the House have certainly raised funds for their own campaigns and for their own party, and they follow the rules.

As I mentioned, we have strict rules when it comes to fundraising at the federal level in Canada. It is \$1,550 maximum with regard to raising money for political parties and the bill would make it more open and transparent so Canadians can know who attended a fundraiser, when it happened, and where it happened. It is part of our democratic expression and part of how we contribute to our democracy.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to remind hon. members that the procedure is that somebody asks the question and somebody answers. I know everybody is excited and is throwing more and more questions, but we can only answer one at a time. I am sure the hon. minister appreciated all those extra questions coming her way, but she can only take one at a time.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Victoria.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her presentation this evening. As my colleague from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo has reminded us, the reason we are here is cash for access and the scandals associated with that. The government’s solution has been to provide a certain kind of transparency.

In November, the Prime Minister on his website had something called open and accountable government, part of which says:

There should be no preferential access to government, or appearance of preferential access, accorded to individuals or organizations because they have made financial contributions to politicians and political parties.

In January, the minister’s mandate letter instructed her to devise a law that would make fundraisers involving ministers and leadership candidates more transparent including requiring them to be conducted in publicly available spaces.

I would like the minister to confirm whether or not her bill does what her mandate letter required.

Government Orders

• (2110)

Hon. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, my bill indeed does what my mandate letter requires, which is advertising in advance where political fundraisers will take place. When we advertise where they are and where tickets can be purchased, that information is then available to the public. The bill is about ensuring that Canadians have access to this information and that it is indeed more open and transparent when it comes to political fundraising.

We know that all members in the House and all political parties require funds to operate. We also know what happens at political fundraisers. We have all attended them. Groups of like-minded Canadians get together to support a candidate or a party that shares their aspirations, that shares what they hope to see in the future of their country. This is one way for them to contribute to ensuring that the dialogue persists and that we have a robust and vibrant dialogue between different parties within our democracy.

[Translation]

Mrs. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. minister for her very clear speech, which opens the door for me to ask another question.

[English]

Beyond making political fundraising more open and transparent, Bill C-50 would also make technical changes to Canada's Elections Act with regard to nomination and leadership contestant expenses.

[Translation]

Could the minister tell the House what changes are being proposed?

[English]

Hon. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-50 would respond to a recommendation from the Chief Electoral Officer to align certain leadership and nomination contestant expense rules with that of election candidates. This recommendation was unanimously supported by the procedure and House affairs committee during its study of the CEO's report.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, clearly, I agree that one of the few areas of Canadian political life, which is reflected as far better than most other democracies, has been our control of fundraising. Accepting donations from anyone other than an individual Canadian is already illegal federally. I come from British Columbia. We hope to see changes in political financing there, because clearly campaigns are financed without any rules at all in the current situation.

I am disappointed that we did not look at the broader question. I asked the minister, did she consider or would she consider in future looking at more equitable public financing? The public is already financing political parties. We need to make it clear that the largest contribution from the taxpayer to political parties was not the per vote subsidy, it is the return to political parties at the end of a campaign for money they spent during the campaign. That is rebated as much as 50% to 60%, depending on whether we are talking riding or federally, so there is public financing already.

Would the minister consider returning to the approach that was put in place under former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien to bring back a fairer system?

Hon. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her interest.

This legislation specifically deals with political fundraising events. I am looking at a number of recommendations that will be coming from the CEO and Elections Canada's report. He made 132 recommendations. As I mentioned, both the House committee on procedures and House affairs as well as the equivalent Senate committee are working on reports. I look forward to receiving those recommendations to inform the work I do moving forward.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed the minister is not standing up and following-through on the promise made during the election by the Prime Minister that 2015 would be the last election with first past the post. I want to register how disappointed I am that was taken out of her mandate letter, and she is not standing up here today talking about how we would move forward in that way.

I know the bill is about political fundraising. First, I feel that cabinet members and the Prime Minister, who are government, should not be at political fundraisers, period. They can be at events where everyone can have access. We should not have to pay to talk to a cabinet minister or the Prime Minister at any time during their mandate. Could she comment on that?

• (2115)

Hon. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, this government has been the most open and accessible government that Canadians have seen in recent history in terms of being able to access the Prime Minister, whether it is at a town hall, or a minister, whether it is at a round table throughout the country. We are very much committed to engaging with Canadians, as indeed are all members of this House. It is important for us as public officer holders to ensure that we remain engaged with Canadians all the time.

When it comes to political fundraising, however, this is something that is different. This is about people expressing their values, their ideas, and their support for a given political party. That is why we maintain this is an important right for Canadians to be able to exercise. Furthermore, we acknowledge this is something we should be more open and transparent about, and that when we shine more light, we will see exactly what is happening. This is a very good thing, and I am looking forward to the continued debate on this matter.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this legislation could be understood in three steps. Step number one, the Liberals come up with a fundraising system that is profoundly profitable. Step number two, the public finds out about it and it becomes profoundly unpopular. Step number three, the Liberals attempt to develop a piece of legislation that would provide ethical cover for continuing this unpopular practice because it is so darned profitable.

Government Orders

This legislation is the Liberal Party's attempt to legitimize and normalize the practice that is sometimes referred to as pay to play, and sometimes referred to as cash for access. Either of those two descriptions makes a point. If one wants to play in this game, if one wants to have access to ministers, then pay up, and one can have access to the cabinet minister of choice, in particular, the Prime Minister himself or the finance minister, although every minister is a part of this game.

The goal of Bill C-50 is to legitimize this process. The Liberals are getting attacked. They can say it was the expressed will of Parliament that this practice be continued, because they will publicize some information about these enormously profitable events in which only the Liberal government can participate.

This is an issue here. It was a huge scandal for the Liberal government in Ontario, which has quotas for ministers to seek out great events at which access would be provided only to those who paid up to the Liberal Party of Ontario. This has been a huge issue in British Columbia. It may very well have been the issue that will cause the Liberal government out there to ultimately lose power, but that remains to be seen. There is a hung parliament in British Columbia, but this is a big scandal out there.

I want to give some examples of what the federal Liberals are doing, not the provincial Liberals in B.C., or the Liberals in Ontario. I want to give some examples of how this works and what it is about. I am going to give some examples of actual pay to play or cash for access events over the course of the past year or so.

Chinese billionaires have been attending Liberal fundraisers even though they are not allowed to donate because they are not Canadian citizens. One of these individuals Zhang Bin, who is also a Communist Party apparatchik, attended a May 19, 2016 fundraiser at the Toronto home of Chinese Business Chamber of Canada chairperson Benson Wong according to this report in *The Globe and Mail*. A few weeks later Mr. Zhang and a business partner donated \$200,000 to the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, and \$50,000 to build a statute of the current Prime Minister's father.

Here is a second example. On November 7, B.C. multimillionaire Miaofoei Pan hosted a fundraiser at his West Vancouver mansion, and made the case to the Prime Minister, at this event that he had to pay to get into and that he also hosted, to allow Chinese investment in seniors care and real estate developments, and ease rules for rich immigrants from China. What better way to get preferential access than to have it in your own home? This took place as the federal government had been reviewing a \$1 billion bid by China's Anbang Insurance Group to buy one of British Columbia's largest retirement home nursing care chains.

Here is another example. An event scheduled for September 29 was actually cancelled, but was organized by senior business executive Geoff Smith, CEO of the giant construction firm EllisDon, which was involved in a scandal in Ontario over very similar events, and Linda Hasenfratz, CEO of Linamar, Canada's second largest automotive parts company. Both companies could benefit from government decisions concerning infrastructure and automobile policy.

Here is another example of pay to play as exercised by the Liberal government. The finance minister was scheduled to attend a fundraiser that cost \$1,500 to get in the door in Calgary on November 2 at the home of Shaw Communications Inc. President Jay Mehr. The telecom firm has directly lobbied the finance department eight times. Is there a conflict there?

• (2120)

Here is an example of an exclusive event. On November 7, the finance minister attended an event in Calgary, and the Prime Minister attended an event in Toronto. This was an exclusive event held at the Toronto condominium of philanthropist Nancy Pencer and funeral home executive, Michael Benjamin. Helping to sell tickets were Barry Sherman, the chairman of generic drug manufacturer Apotex and Joel Reitman, who runs global venture firm Jilley Capital. Apotex is the company whose executives had civic-minded children, I believe under the age of 10, who decided to make contributions to the leadership campaign of Joe Volpe, when he was running for the Liberal leadership. That is the kind of company the cabinet over there runs with.

Another event is a corporate law firm in Toronto with interests in Ottawa lobbying the federal government, hosting an event where the justice minister was the guest of honour, for goodness' sake. The finance minister was the star attraction at a \$1,500 per person Liberal Party fundraiser in the home of a wealthy Halifax developer. Another event was \$500 per person. That is a bargain price for the finance minister.

Members get the idea. This is a sample of the kinds of activities the cash for access activities in which the federal cabinet members have all been involved. The Prime Minister, the finance minister, the justice minister, and the whole crew met with people who do business with the federal government, and who now get to speak face-to-face with these ministers, when no one else gets that kind of access.

Pay to play is the backbone of Liberal fundraising. To make this point, I want to say how much the Liberals raise when they have these kinds of events. In this report, they would not actually say, but attendance figures had suggested that the party brings in between \$50,000 and \$120,000 per event, when either the Prime Minister or the finance minister is the star attraction, and the ticket price is \$1,500. That is how much they bring in at an event in an evening. There are paying very special attention, and it has had a big impact on their bottom line. This is the backbone of their financing.

Government Orders

The pay to play process for raising funds started early last year, but it really took off in the final quarter of last year. Liberal Party finances went from \$4 million, substantially behind the Conservative Party in the first quarter of 2016, to \$5.8 million, well over \$1 million ahead of the Conservative Party in the final quarter of 2016.

This was going to be the ace in the hole for the Liberals. This was how they were going to finance the next election. Let us be clear about this. When our party was in government, we did not do this stuff, but even if there were no ethical considerations holding back other parties in this place, only one party can deliver cabinet ministers, people who can, with the stroke of a pen, make someone's company tens of millions or hundreds of millions of dollars richer, at the expense of the Canadian people. Only the government can do that. There is an inbuilt incumbency advantage. This is an inbuilt way of ensuring that the governing party can raise funds in a way that is simply impossible for other parties.

That in itself is an outrage. Any system that is designed to give the incumbent party an ongoing, perpetual systemic advantage is inherently morally wrong. That is leaving aside the fact that giving preferential access to cabinet ministers, when the average Canadian does not get this chance, is absolutely contemptible.

This is not actually illegal right now. It is not unlawful, but it is a violation of the Prime Minister's ethics code, his open and accountable government code, put in place in 2015. Let me read the fine words the Prime Minister put at the front of this code. I do not know if he writes his own stuff, but there is a unique sanctimonious tone to whatever he puts on paper.

Mr. John Brassard: He had his hand over his heart.

Mr. Scott Reid: As my colleague suggested, Mr. Speaker, he probably had his hand over his heart when he put this down. It reads:

● (2125)

To be worthy of Canadians' trust, we must always act with integrity.

He gets breathless, too.

This is not merely a matter of adopting the right rules, or of ensuring technical compliance with those rules. As Ministers, you and your staff must uphold the highest standards of honesty and impartiality, and both the performance of your official duties and the arrangement of your private affairs should bear the closest public scrutiny. This is an obligation that is not fully discharged by simply acting within the law.

Those Liberals have the highest standards. They stand above anybody else. They are demigods of integrity. Now, specifically, this is the injunction they place on themselves with regard to lobbyists and those who seek out special access to them.

There should be no preferential access to government, or appearance of preferential access, accorded to individuals or organizations because they have made financial contributions to politicians and political parties.

Those are the Prime Minister's words.

Of course, the Liberals have completely violated this, but they have not broken the law. The thing is, though, that they have broken their word—absolutely, completely, and flagrantly broken their word. Their words mean nothing, as we can see. On top of that, they have also violated the norms of acceptable behaviour. Even if the Prime Minister had not put that sanctimonious bumph down on paper, the fact is that they violated what everybody thinks are the

norms of acceptable behaviour. There is a crime called influence peddling and while this does not meet the technical description, it is clear that is exactly what is going on. The influence of the Prime Minister, the finance minister, and the justice minister are being peddled like so much soap.

This is why so many people have had the incorrect impression that the law was being violated. John Ivison wrote a piece for the *National Post* last November condemning the Ethics Commissioner for not having cracked down on the Prime Minister and the other members of cabinet for their outrageous behaviour and the commissioner was forced to write back to explain. I have her response from her website on November 30 of last year, entitled, "Response to a column in the *National Post*: the Commissioner sets the record straight".

What she sets straight is that she cannot do anything because, outrageous as this behaviour is, it does not violate the actual rules. She goes through the various sections of the law and says, "It is a strange section. It fails to prohibit all preferential treatment, which should be the rule." This is section 7 of the conflict of interest legislation. She says it should be the rule, but "Section 7 only prohibits preferential treatment that results from the intervention from a third party." Liberals found a way around the rules, which is another signature of the government. If there is a way of violating the spirit of a rule but not violating its letter, they are all over that.

To be clear, everybody thinks this is either illegal or is astonished to discover that it is not unlawful, and yet it is not. As *The Hill Times* summarized it:

So [the] Justice Minister...wasn't breaking any rule by being the guest of honour at the pricey fundraiser organized by a Bay Street law firm. It just smells really bad and violates the spirit of the government's own code of conduct.

This also explains why, when Nanos, the polling organization, asked Canadians what they thought—

● (2130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am calling for a quorum count.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): We are missing three. Ring the bells.

And the bells having rung:

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): We now have quorum.

The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, last November, the Nanos polling organization asked Canadians what they thought of cash for access or pay to play. I will just read from *The Globe and Mail* coverage what the answer was. It says:

Government Orders

A Nanos public-opinion survey, conducted for *The Globe and Mail* from Nov. 26 to 30, shows that 62 per cent of Canadians disapprove of the Liberal Party's practice of charging people \$1,500 a ticket to meet in private with Mr. Trudeau and senior cabinet ministers who oversee major spending or policy-making decisions.

Canadians strongly do not approve. There we go. Number one, it is a profitable way of raising money. Number two, Canadians strongly do not approve. Sixty-two per cent were against this and 33% approved, so 2:1 Canadians think this is a bad idea. Therefore, the Liberals need cover and their cover is to say, "We have this legislation that is going to still allow all these things to happen, but there will be public notice that the events are occurring". Of course, there is public notice anyway. They are selling tickets, so that is not a change or an innovation.

It would be on a website now, which is nice. They would not be in a private residence. That was their promise that they subsequently backed off from. Members will notice how many of those that I cited were in private residences. I think the reason they took that out is that this is a key component. The really special access to the PM, to the finance minister, and to others comes from being the host.

As well, there would be a reporting afterward. The fact is that everything gets reported anyway, because donations are reported in Canada. They get put up on the Elections Canada website. We could go back and track every single donor who contributed more than a relatively paltry sum to my riding association or my campaign or any of the leadership campaigns we had going on for the Conservative Party. There is simply no new meat here.

This is simply a way of having it so that the next time someone like John Ivison thinks of writing a story, he will say, "Wait a minute, they passed a law about this; I guess it is now okay". The next time the Ethics Commissioner has something to raise, she could say, "After the issue came up, Parliament passed a law, so it is the expressed will of Parliament that this sort of practice be permitted". This is all about regularizing this practice. The legislation is all about legitimizing this practice. This is all about saying, "Yes, influence peddling is okay. Influence peddling is just the way we do business here in Canada."

If there is a theme other than sanctimoniousness about the current government, a theme other than finding ways of violating the spirit of the law over and over again, a theme other than abandoning conventions of behaviour, whether it is about unilateral changes to the Standing Orders in the House of Commons or the unilateral breach of the practices that we have all had regarding fundraising, if there is a theme beyond those it is this: that we need to go back to the good old days. I do not mean the good old days of Trudeau senior. I mean the good old days of the 19th century, with no restrictions at all on the practice of power. Far from moving ahead to a new age or a new era, the current government is the most retrograde government.

I have been here since Jean Chrétien's day, and I was not the biggest fan of Jean Chrétien but the current Prime Minister is so much worse. In fact, I think it was a surprise to him that our prime minister, despite his vast powers, is not actually an elected dictator. There are in fact careful restrictions in this place and out there in public, some of them in law, many of them simply in conventions and practices and usages.

The Prime Minister frankly regards all of these as an impediment and would like to see them swept away. He is not our elected dictator, but it is my belief that he thinks he should be our elected dictator. Every four years we will go back and the people will decide whether they want to keep him on, but that is not what the Prime Minister of Canada is. He needs to learn that, and I can assure members that the Conservatives will be voting against Bill C-50.

• (2135)

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must say I find myself unsettled this evening by the creeping and insidious appearance of a tone of sanctimony in some of the comments coming from the other side of the House, particularly with regard to fundraising events and how tickets are purchased. Of course, the rules that apply now applied during the previous government's tenure as well, and nothing has changed there.

Could the hon. member perhaps explain to the House how the appreciation events that were often held for high-dollar donors worked under the previous Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government, how people bought tickets for those events, and how they were rewarded for those investments? We would be very interested to hear about that.

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, I think this is one of these situations where the Liberals were saying, "We're not claiming we're ethical. We're just saying you're as bad as us."

First, nobody buys tickets for appreciation events. The way an appreciation event works is that the people have already paid, typically, the maximum donation and the appreciation event is then held for the Laurier club in the Liberal Party and for the leaders' circle in the Conservative Party at a convention, and they get to have wine and cheese and hobnob with some cabinet ministers, for sure, when they are on the government side.

I will just make this point. If those are as bad as the parliamentary secretary is implying, and I think he was saying that we are hypocrites for not opposing them, then I have to ask why there is a specific exemption for those events in Bill C-50, so that those events can continue. The leaders' circle events will continue, and so will Laurier club events. I am mystified why he even brought that up at all.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like some clarification.

During the election campaign, the Liberals said that there was broad consensus to change the voting system and that this would be the last election under first past the post. Then, they changed their minds because supposedly there was no broad consensus on electoral reform, which I think is an intellectual conceit.

Will a broad consensus be required to pass Bill C-50 or will it be decided by government party vote?

Government Orders

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, I think that a vote by the government party will suffice in this case.

With regard to the member's other question about the change to the electoral system, in committee four out of five parties came to a consensus. We came to a consensus on the fact that it would be possible to hold a referendum on a proportional system created by the government party, by the Liberals, before the 2019 election. It is entirely possible, and I do not know why the Liberals broke their election promise, unless it is to ensure they will have a political advantage in the next election.

• (2140)

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I usually enjoy the member's speeches because he is such a skilled orator and a fabulous human being. I actually enjoyed that speech but I did not agree with much of it. I also enjoy the fact that we both agree that we should have followed through on the commitment to electoral reform.

However, I had to wonder if he had developed, and I am so concerned, selective amnesia around the Harper years and the true distortion of our parliamentary tradition and constitutional rigour of tradition that said that a prime minister does not prorogue the House to avoid a confidence vote that he or she knows will be lost. In fact, Stephen Harper is the only prime minister in the entire Commonwealth in over a century to do what he did in 2008.

It is true the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka tried, but the governor general of Sri Lanka did not give that prime minister the ability to do prorogation to avoid a confidence vote he thought he would lose.

I think we have seen some modest improvements under the present government, and members know I will hold it to account. However, I am dismayed by the fact we have not seen more. I have seen an improvement, and I think hon. member would agree, of more true cabinet government and less control by the PMO. I think making the mandate letters public was a good thing.

I am dismayed, as the member knows, by the failures. I am very dismayed by the fact that we are sitting until midnight through June and that we have so many time allocations. What I am trying to tell the government over there is to do better. However, I cannot sit silently by and pretend that this is the worst abuse of power I have ever seen because, holy smokes, it is not.

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, I would not go so far as to say that this is the worst government we have ever seen, if we are going back through Canada's entire history, because I have only been a member a Parliament for the last sixteen and a half years. I was merely commenting in comparison to the Chrétien government and the Harper government.

I think the behaviour in the House in general has been gradually improving over that time. I do not mean that the government is better here. I am talking about the actual practice of decorum in the House. I think that has improved.

The easiest story in the world for a reporter to write is how things are so much worse than they were in the golden age of, and then they name something that is just receding over the horizon, such as the

golden Trudeau versus Mulroney years. The golden age has always just disappeared over the horizon. I do not agree with that. I think the opposite is true. That is not to the credit of the Prime Minister. It is to the credit of all of us, in particular the new crops of MPs we had in 2011 and 2015.

With regard to prorogation, I will make the following observation. The prorogation of the House in 2008 to avoid a non-confidence vote was indeed very unusual. The test of a political convention is this: how do the Canadian people respond in the next election? Conventions are not enforced by the courts. They are enforced by popular will, as expressed in an election.

The House was prorogued for a while. The House came back in early 2009. The other parties, the Liberals in particular, said they would defeat the Conservatives if they did not follow the new plan. However, they did not defeat the Conservative government. They could have at that point defeated the government. They did not do so, because they realized they would lose an election under those conditions, which makes the point that the convention actually shifted to accept those circumstances. Although it was at that point unprecedented, it is in fact a practice that has defined what the convention is vis-à-vis prorogation.

There was a second prorogation that was actually more controversial. I have a feeling that it may be the one the hon. member was referring to. I would have to think about how I feel about that prorogation. The one she mentioned I think was entirely conventional. In fact, it was a definitive conventional prorogation because of its outcome.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to fundraising, the hon. member is also a member in Ontario. I wonder if he can comment, based on his history in this place and the history of the Liberal government in Ontario, whether he sees any similarities between what went on with the Dalton McGuinty-Kathleen Wynne government and the government here.

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, being an astute observer, my hon. colleague has, I suspect, noted one or two parallels with the Ontario Liberal government, starting with all the personnel. The same people have passed over. Clearly, this fundraising practice was started by the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals in Ontario. It blew up on them. It is one of the reasons they are so very unpopular today.

What is also interesting, however, is that they reacted very differently than the federal government. They actually passed a piece of legislation forbidding ministers from being at fundraising events. More than that, people who are candidates to become members of the provincial parliament and people who are already members of the provincial parliament but are not in cabinet are now prohibited from being at their own fundraisers. I actually think they have overdone it. To their credit, they have at least gone out and said that ministers cannot be present at this kind of pay-to-play event.

That is not what has been done here at the federal level. It was not what was done in British Columbia either. I think that is one of the reasons Christy Clark is now in so very much trouble.

Government Orders

• (2145)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to say it is a pleasure to be rising, but at this time of night, that would be a lie, and I do not wish to mislead the House. I am, however, very pleased to be standing to talk about this charade called the election reform legislation. I want to put it in context in the time that is available.

The Liberals released their famous “Open and Accountable Government” guide to much fanfare, but none of it is legally binding, as the Prime Minister demonstrated, of course, by ignoring it altogether.

Canadians have become deeply concerned about the government's fundraising practices. My friend from Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston used the expressions Canadians have come to know with the government: “cash for access” and “pay to play”. I had not heard those terms before the government was elected, I concede, but now, of course, we hear them all the time.

Because of that practice, there was a concern about conflicts of interest at these various events. This bill is purporting to be the reform to address Canadians' concerns. Of course, it does nothing of the sort. It is, sadly, a half-baked measure that does not stop the cash-for-access events from happening whatsoever. It just makes it easier for Canadians to hear about them. I am not sure what that accomplishes.

We know they are happening. I guess we are supposed to feel better as Canadians that now it is out in the open. We can still have private parties where we invite friends of the party to come, and now we will know who the people are on the list. The Prime Minister will be there, or the Minister of Finance. I want to know what this is going to do to the lobbyist business. I know how many of my colleagues are concerned about the lobbying industry and how it is not doing very well. Frankly, why would I want to hire a lobbyist, when I could go myself, pay a few bucks, go and talk to the Minister of Finance, and maybe get the deal? Why spend thousands on a lobbyist? I am pretty persuasive. I will just go and talk him up. That is, of course, regularized by this legislation. I want this to perhaps be subtitled the lobbyists' despair act, because that may be what is going to happen as a consequence.

Not a single recommendation from the ethics committee, which studied the law on political fundraisers, found its way into this mishmash legislation. It is surprising to my colleagues that a committee would not have its recommendations addressed by the government, but I am sad to report that this appears to be the case.

I want to be clear from the outset, because of the way politics is played, that the NDP will of course be supporting this bill so we can refer it to the committee and tear it apart, as it deserves to be torn apart, and so we can actually have a meaningful response to Canadians' concerns about cash-for-access events.

I have to give credit where credit is due. The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston did an excellent job of reminding Canadians why we are here tonight at this late hour talking about this little fig leaf the Liberals are proposing to address the cash-for-access dilemma. He talked about Chinese billionaires attending Liberal fundraisers and making donations to the Pierre Elliott Trudeau

Foundation, and maybe a statue here and there as well, or West Van billionaires having people over for dinner and talking about how the Chinese could buy a nursing care chain and so forth. Again, where were the lobbyists? I guess they did not need to come, because that was discussed at that meeting. Do not take my word for it. The individual who wanted that was actually bragging about his access to the Prime Minister that night.

I also want to salute the member for pointing out another anomaly. Frankly, this law applies to other parties as well as the governing party of the day. It applies to an electoral district association the leader of a party or an aspiring leader would attend. Somehow we are supposed to think that is fair. It is sauce for the goose. It is supposed to be tit for tat. Frankly, I am not sure who wants to go talk to an opposition party. Surely only one party can deliver a cabinet minister. That is the dripping roast lobbyists tend to want.

Good news, we are going to have them in private homes. I asked the minister, when she spoke, if that was covered, because that was in the mandate letter in January the Prime Minister gave the hon. Minister of Democratic Institutions. I do not think I got the answer to that question, but I can tell Canadians that the law says they can still have these fundraisers in that West Vancouver billionaire's private mansion, and the Prime Minister will come, and there will be a discussion about hockey games, I guess, or perhaps the events of the day in some foreign land. Far be it to talk about things that might involve cash for access or issues of that sort. I am sure they would never come up.

• (2150)

I have another example. When the Minister of Finance had billions of dollars to invest in infrastructure and other initiatives, such as a new container terminal and the development of federal harbour land in Halifax, what did he do? He had a private Liberal Party fundraiser at the home of a gentleman named Fred George. Fred George is a mining tycoon turned land developer in that city. According to a *Globe and Mail* article, about 15 people attended the \$1,500 per person Liberal Laurier Club event. Among the people who were there was Jim Spatz, a federal director on the Halifax Port Authority board of directors and a land developer. These are exactly the types of cozy coincidences that cause concern to Canadians and give rise to the perception of undue influence, whether a direct conflict of interest exists or not.

One might ask why that is so important. It is because the Prime Minister said it is important. In Annex B of his famous “Open and Accountable Government” document, it states:

Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries must avoid conflict of interest, the appearance of conflict of interest and situations that have the potential to involve conflicts of interest.

Government Orders

Am I stretching it to think this event might just have a tad of potential conflict of interest? That is what the Prime Minister told us would not happen anymore under the enlightened regime before Canadians today that asks us to accept this initiative as addressing that problem. It does not.

What else did the Prime Minister say in his “Open and Accountable Government” document? He said something much more specific.

It states:

There should be no preferential access to government, or appearance of preferential access, accorded to individuals or organizations because they have made financial contributions to politicians and political parties.

I do not know about other members, but when I spend \$1,500 to go to an event with a large number of Liberal donors and the Prime Minister or the Minister of Finance, I have a feeling that there might be the potential for conflict of interest. Some cynics might even think preferential access is available.

It is disappointing that the government did not respond to the concerns of Canadians with a genuine and robust effort to actually clean up its fundraising scandals.

I come from the province of British Columbia, where it took a *New York Times* journalist at a bar in Whistler to call it what it is: the wild west of fundraising. In our province, I am ashamed to tell members, there are absolutely no limits to how much money one can spend. We love preferential access. We think it is great. Contrast that to the province of Quebec, where two or three years ago, after some scandals there, a political decision was made to restrict the maximum donation for a party or an individual to \$100. Quebec should be proud of leading the way for this kind of reform. Did the Liberals go anywhere near that? No. They decided that they would have these fundraising parties. Not to worry, because it would all be on the website so people could see who attended. That is not reform. That is a joke. I will come back to that in a moment.

I want to come back to a point I made when I was addressing the Minister of Democratic Institutions. I am sure it was inadvertent, but I believe that people would agree that she left the impression that somehow events that happen in private homes are off limits. They are entirely consistent. In other words, one can still have these cozy events in private homes.

In the mandate letter the Prime Minister gave to that minister, it very clearly said that the law would make fundraisers involving ministers, party leaders, and leadership candidates more transparent, including requiring them to be conducted “in publicly-available spaces”. This is not that law. One can still meet in someone's private home in West Vancouver and talk about transactions with government leaders, and that is just fine. This time they just have to tell us who is there, and that seems to be it. They just have to put it on the website.

● (2155)

That is a very modern solution, but it does not go anywhere near addressing the problem. I would not want anyone to think that somehow these cozy little deals in private homes are off limits. They are not. They are very much alive and well in Canada under this law.

According to media analysis, the Liberal Party scheduled more than 100 cash-for-access events in the year 2016 alone. They are enormously profitable, as we know. We are not just talking about transparency; we are talking about the principle of cash for access itself. As the government once recognized, it is not just about undue influence but about the perception of that undue influence.

If Canadians are watching at this late hour, I need to remind them that the bill does not in any way, shape, or form address the cash-for-access events. They are alive and well and continue to be profitable. A prime minister or a finance minister will be coming to a private residence nearby, but this time people are going to know who is there.

Bill C-50 creates a new class of what are called “regulated fundraising events”, subject to special reporting requirements. In theory, these requirements would apply to a broad range of events with ticket prices over \$200. It would require public notice in the days leading up to the event and the public release of the attendees' names within 30 days following the event. In practice, there are glaring gaps, most notably, as my colleague earlier commented, the exclusion for what are called “contributor appreciation events” at party conventions. In other words, the bill as written appears to subject to its reporting requirements an event that requires a \$250 donation to attend, but not one organized to express appreciation for individuals who have donated \$250. I do not understand that, but that is what the bill says.

For example, the bill would continue to allow donors at the Laurier Club, the high-donor Liberal organization, to contribute \$1,500 at party conventions and then gain access to the exclusive events with cabinet ministers and the prime minister. They do not seem to think that is a problem at all. It is too bad the Prime Minister did when he wrote a non-binding document that was celebrated not that long ago, called “Open and Accountable Government”.

If anyone doubts that donors really do expect access in return for their cash, let me quote the website of the Liberal Party's Leaders Circle, an elite tier of donors who not only max out their donation limits set by existing political finance laws but also bundle together at least 10 others. These donors, who brought at least \$16,500 to the Liberal Party, are promised a variety of recognition opportunities, including an annual dinner with the leader and invitations to events and discussions with leaders within the party.

Government Orders

What is that? I would call it unique access to the Prime Minister of Canada and members of his cabinet. It just costs a little more. Apparently the ministers attended 31 such appreciation events last year alone. Under this bill, what would change about those? Zero, so it is deeply disappointing that the government did not respond to the concerns of Canadians with a genuine and robust effort to actually clean up political fundraising. It could have followed the lead of other governments that have actually banned politicians and candidates from attending such events. Instead we have a fig leaf and we are supposed to be happy about it.

I have another concern I promised I would come back to. It is that the bill does not just apply to what we would think it would, such as having access to cabinet ministers and the like, because that is what Canadians call cash for access. Somehow it has to cover opposition leaders and their parties as well, which is a bit odd. The thing that worries me is these people are going to have their names on an easily accessible website. Everyone who would come to a Liberal fundraising event would be known, and it would be the same for a Conservative or an NDP fundraising event in similar circumstances.

• (2200)

Let us say a public servant in the current government attended a Conservative fundraising event, or an individual who had aspirations to be appointed to a federal agency or something of that sort attended. It is their public right, their right as Canadians, whether public servants or otherwise, to attend a fundraising event for the Conservative Party, an opposition party.

Somebody in the Liberal Party or apparatchiks in the government would be able to cross-reference the list of donors, the list of people who gave money to the Conservatives, and then know who was not a supporter of the government of the day. What would happen then? What they would be able to find out by cross-referencing is people who will not be appointed to a federal agency because they are the wrong political stripe. A public servant might suddenly see that their best new opportunity is in Iqaluit, because that is where they might send people who are outed as donors to another party.

As the Liberals say, and they may say, that is not something we would do. We are not like that.

However, we are making this law for a long, long time until it is changed, so it is not an excuse to say, “We would not do that”, because in the hands of another, less generous party, that could happen. Therefore I would ask, as this gets to committee, that we consider that possibility.

Frankly, are there privacy concerns with this? In the zeal to have transparency and actually not do anything about cash for access, but let everybody know who comes to these events, are there issues of privacy? I would ask the Privacy Commissioner to opine on that.

Yes, indeed, we all have a right to attend political events. The lifeblood of our democracy is those people who wish to get involved, and we salute those who participate, but it seems there may be a high price to pay, both in the loss of an individual's privacy as well as the potential impact on their career aspirations as a consequence of doing so. I think that is something that at least is worth consideration.

I want to suggest that the bill is deeply flawed. It is flawed in principle and it is flawed in drafting. It does not do what Canadians expected it to do. It ignores committee recommendations on ethics that could have made a difference. Instead it is providing more information, perhaps to the detriment of individual Canadians, so I ask the government to be open to suggestions at committee.

It is not often that suggestions that come from opposition parties are accepted, but perhaps this is an exception. I would welcome the opportunity to have a serious conversation about what the Liberals are trying to do.

Cash for access will continue. We can still buy access to the Prime Minister and cabinet ministers if we have the money to pay. In press releases and commentary, the Minister of Democratic Institutions told reporters that what happens at the cabinet table is not influenced by what happens at fundraising events. That is a direct quote. Even if that is true for this government, which I severely doubt, a lot of Canadians do not expect it to be true. They think that there is an appearance of problems here, and as the Prime Minister himself argued, that ought not to be the case, but it is the case and it will continue to be the case. I ask the Liberals what they think they are achieving by such a hollow exercise.

Having these events in private homes where the media are not required to come to tell us who is there and what they are doing and what they are talking about is just ridiculous. It is just a complete travesty. It will not achieve what Canadians expected would happen here. We all expressed outrage at these cash-for-access events. We all expected meaningful reform, and this is what we were given. It is not even consistent with the open and accountable government document that the Prime Minister talked about.

We will have to support the bill so we can get it to committee. Then let us fix it. Let us roll up our sleeves and make it better for Canadians.

• (2205)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech.

To hear him say it, one would believe that what happened in Parliament was terrible, and that no one else has ever paid to attend an event. It is funny, because the New Democrats see themselves as political angels. They have never done anything wrong.

It is funny, because today is close to a special anniversary for the provincial NDP leader. I have to read this:

[*English*]

“Andrea Horwath to host cash-for-access fundraiser next month”. It is almost a year and a week ago. What was the price? It was \$10,000 per ticket.

Government Orders

I know they love to mix Queen's Park and the B.C. Liberals and whatnot. They talk about cash for access, but their own leader, the member for Outremont, said that even he had a cash-for-access event at \$300 a head. To say that the NDP is holier than thou is just a little rich.

We are trying to bring a little more transparency to these events. Would he not agree that transparency in these events contributes and benefits each party across the aisle?

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I think I appreciate what the member said, if I understood it. I thought we were here to talk about a bill that is before Parliament about improving the electoral finance laws.

I cannot comment on Andrea Horwath. I can comment I suppose, if he wants to talk about provinces, on the B.C. Liberals. They have \$10 million sitting in the bank and an infinite number of dollars that companies and individuals provide to that party. If that is the solution he thinks is relevant, I suppose we can go back to the wild west, as it is called.

I do not want to go there. I want to go to a place where we address the concerns of Canadians. Do I think transparency is going to make much difference? Not really. Do I think Canadians expected a bill like this to address the cash-for-access scandals over the last few years? I do not think they would have expected this. I think they would have expected something a little more meaningful.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not my business to tell the NDP House leader his business, but I just wanted to put this thought in his head. The bill is going to go to committee whether his party votes in favour of it or not. I am going to guess that if the bill is not amended at third reading in a manner he finds acceptable, they are probably going to vote against it at third reading, so I would just encourage him to think about the possibility of voting against it at second reading. He will get his chance at committee to make the suggestions he wants to make and to tear it apart anyway.

That is just a thought to put in his head.

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the wisdom of the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, who has been here much longer than I have. He is a valuable member of the House for sure, and that is a strategic question that we will certainly consider.

I still want this place to work. I still believe that committees can make a difference in legislation. The principle of electoral finance reform, which is what second reading is about, is one I hope we all agree on, but the devil is in the details, always, which is where the problems lie.

I think the bill could be fixed. It could be expanded. Perhaps we could, for example, put into the bill the very requirements that were in the open and accountable government document. We could apply the conflict of interest language to political fundraisers and maybe do what the Prime Minister asked of the minister of democratic institutions, which was to make sure it is only in publicly available spaces.

I am simply saying there are things we could do to make this bill less of a joke than it is. I would like to get it to committee so we can try.

● (2210)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Victoria put himself forward as something of an expert in conflict of interest processes and the way we should conduct ourselves as members.

I want to ask him a hypothetical question. Conflict of interest guidelines say that we must fulfill public duties with honesty, uphold the highest standards to avoid real or apparent conflict of interest, and arrange our private affairs in a manner that bears the closest public scrutiny. Would a member of Parliament who has sworn allegiance to Canada but who testifies against Canada, who is paid by a foreign corporation and never reveals how much he or she was paid by the foreign corporation, present any conflict of interest issues that the hon. member thinks a member of Parliament should consider before taking those steps to testify against his own government?

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question, but I do not understand its relevance to electoral finance reform, so I do not know that I will answer that question.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, from the beginning of time, it has always been the party in power that tends to raise the most money, because the owners of large corporations find it worthwhile to invest to try to get access to the government and therefore win contracts.

Should we not try to learn from the mistakes of certain provinces? Quebec, for instance, had a scandal involving political party financing, and that province had to reflect on other ways to solve this problem.

Would we not do well to learn from that and clean up our own house, once and for all, so that it is not always the party in power that stands to gain the most from political fundraising?

[*English*]

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, it is so obviously true that the party in power is the one that will collect the most money in these circumstances. I wonder why a bill that is designed to apply to both opposition and government parties alike seems to treat them in exactly the same way. It seems kind of nonsensical. I do not understand, given that reality, why we would not address the issue at hand head on.

The issue we thought we were addressing was preferential access to prime ministers and ministers, who would have a disproportionate impact on business and other interests because they could make decisions to favour them. That is not the case in our system with opposition parties. Treating them alike and pretending that it is all the same is essentially a smoke screen.

I thank the member for that observation.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, does my colleague figure that people at party conventions would be paying a certain amount of money to attend an event with the party leader? That came up in a question from a Liberal MP.

It would not bother me to know that the Conservative Party organized a meet-and-greet with the leader at its convention. Most of the people paying to attend are already interested members.

Can we make a distinction, then, between events where business people are trying to get access to a minister or the Prime Minister to advance their interests and party conventions where members who have been involved for decades decide to pay extra to be at an event with the party leader?

[English]

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, again, that is an excellent observation. It is the kind of distinction we can focus on at committee when we seek to improve the bill.

There absolutely is a difference, and a clear one, between long-standing party members at a convention being recognized and the like and people who are simply at events in order to influence the government of the day, ministers, and the prime minister as well.

The committee will provide an opportunity to draw bright distinctions between those situations and try to make it better for Canadians.

• (2215)

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on Bill C-50, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act, political financing, which we feel will help to raise the bar that we, as parliamentarians, are held to when it comes to the important issue of openness and accountability in political fundraising.

We know Canadians value our democracy. While Canada already has one of the strictest electoral finance systems in the world, we recognize we can do even more to increase the transparency in the way that political parties finance. That is why Bill C-50 would contribute to enhance trust in our democratic institutions by providing Canadians with more information than ever before.

Canadians will know who is going to fundraisers, when they are going to be held, and the amount required to attend. Canadians deserve to know that their elected representatives are playing fair. Bill C-50 would not only help achieve this goal by implementing new rules to make political financing even more open and transparent, but it would also allow those across our country to know more about how the political fundraising that the parties conduct is undertaken so they can continue to have confidence in our important and valued democratic process. It will also allow them to make up their minds about who they will vote for in elections and how they can be better informed for that purpose.

As my hon. colleagues know, key regulations, such as spending limits, a cap on annual donations, and a ban on corporate and union donations, are already in place when it comes to political financing in Canada. At the national level, all Canadian citizens and permanent residents have the ability to contribute up to a maximum of, this

year, \$1,550 annually to the registered party and then of course an equivalent amount to the riding association for the local candidate.

Additionally, contributions to a federal political party are reported to Elections Canada and donations of over \$200 are already published online with the information, including the contributor's name and address.

Canadians elected our government on a promise of openness and transparency. Canadians have a right to know even more than they do now when it comes to political fundraising. It is our responsibility, as parliamentarians, to serve those we represent. By taking action to make our political fundraising system more open and transparent, we are raising the bar on an informed choice in our political process.

Our government understands that many actions, such as attending a fundraising event, play a very important role in our democratic expression. Choosing to financially support a political party is not only a recognized right, protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but also accounts for a valuable form of civic engagement. As a society that values democratic engagement, we must continue to uphold and protect this essential right.

Furthermore, our government knows that Canada's current political party system plays an important part in our democracy. It has contributed to our status as a model for many other democracies around the world, it is a key attribute of our democratic process, and it allows like-minded Canadians from all across the country, from diverse regions, social classes, religions, ethnic groups, and gender identities, to work together on a common purpose.

With this in mind, we must remember that political parties require funding to operate. We must continue to respect the right of all Canadians to choose how to financially support the party of their choice, while ensuring we are providing Canadians with open and transparent information about how this is done. This means taking significant steps to ensure that those across the country can view and understand how political fundraising works and plays a role in our democratic process.

Canadians will be able to determine, as a result of this law, when a political fundraiser is happening, who attended the fundraiser, and how much a person contributed or paid to get into it. Under the proposed measures of Bill C-50, all political parties that currently have seats in the House of Commons will have 30 days to report to Elections Canada the names and addresses of those who attend any fundraiser covered by the legislation.

Who is covered? Any fundraiser attended by the Prime Minister, cabinet ministers, party leaders, or party leadership contestants with a seat in the House of Commons where over \$200 is required to attend will be subject to these rules. This is commensurate with our current disclosure requirement.

Government Orders

Furthermore, under the proposed legislation, these events will be advertised at least five days in advance, with the date, time, and location of the event. This will all be made clear on the party's website. This information, along with the names and addresses of those attending and the cost of event, will be published online.

As a former volunteer with a political party, as someone who has served as a treasurer of a provincial party, and a treasurer of a riding association, if somebody attended a political fundraising event but someone else had purchased a ticket or he or she attended as a guest, for free, the information might not appear online, whereas for someone who paid the full \$200 cost, it did appear online.

● (2220)

This information was obscured, and this has come up in debate in the House. This legislation addresses that gap and makes the event reporting more transparent and open for Canadians so they can make a decision about whether there is some perception of undue influence.

Political parties will be responsible for ensuring this information is properly reported within the necessary time frame. If these rules are not followed, the party or candidate in question will be required to return all contributions from the event and there could also be a fine to a maximum of \$1,000.

When it comes to our democracy, we know that balance is important. Under the measures brought forward by the legislation, we are successfully balancing the important charter right of democratic expression, while increasing openness and creating even more transparency in political fundraising. We are doing this to allow the electorate to make more informed decisions.

These measures will not only help strengthen and improve our democratic institutions; they will provide Canadians with more information than ever before when it comes to political fundraising events.

I believe all my hon. colleagues will see the value and importance of improving the openness and transparency of our political institutions. As a result, I encourage all members of the House to welcome the legislation so we can raise the bar when it comes to accountability for political events and to strengthen our continued democracy.

It was interesting to listen to some of the other comments. I want to talk a bit about some of the things my colleagues from Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston and Victoria raised with respect to some of the objectives of the act, what was covered, and what was not.

One section in the act states:

at least one person who, in order to attend it, is required...to have made a contribution or contributions of a total amount of more than \$200 to the registered party or any of its registered associations, nomination, contestants, candidates...

It is not just events where a ticket price is included. Events like an appreciation event are covered under this act. There is another opportunity to close a loophole where some parties may have held events and said if people made their donations to the party three months ago, they would not report that they attended the event. We will close the loophole to ensure people are on an even footing when

they attend events as to whether and how their information is recorded and made public to Canadians.

There are some interests in the background. Again, we already have very strict limits. I do not think anyone believes that a colleague in the House is going to be unduly influenced by the low levels of donations made by the limits set forth in our existing Canada Elections Act. Donating \$1,550 among donations in the tens of millions of dollars to parties is not material. It does not go to affect and influence anyone. I do not believe Canadians feel that a de minimis amount of money in the overall scheme of things will affect public officials. I believe they have confidence in them. I do not believe they felt that \$1,500 donations to the Conservative Party unduly influenced the Conservative Party, or that \$1,500-a-year donations to the NDP unduly influenced the NDP. I also do not believe they feel that \$1,550-a-year donations to the Liberal Party unduly influenced the Liberals. These are de minimis in the grand scheme of things when compared to the overall amount that parties fundraise.

However, there have been gaps, and we have seen that with respect to certain types of donations and certain types of political participation. We would not see in the record what clearly happened. At times, this leads to a perception that something is wrong.

I remember reading about events with Dean Del Mastro, a former member of the House, who held fundraising events. The reporters on the events did not seem to understand that when certain people from the party attended these events, they did not pay the ticket price. There were concerns within the articles about there being 300 people at the event, but it only raised a certain amount of money. It cast aspersions on the event that perhaps in that instance should not have been there.

If people understand how the finance laws and the reporting work, which is quite arcane, they will understand that some people were not allowed to pay for a ticket because they had already paid the cap. This change will allow the media and Canadians to understand that when people attend fundraisers in accordance with the rules, it does not always mean people pay the same price. Some people are prohibited from paying an additional amount to attend.

Advertising in advance is important for public scrutiny. Canadians will lose confidence if they only learn about things after the fact. It provides an opportunity for shock and awe type media events and media exposure in respect of events. It is this sort of perception by the media that something inopportune is happening. This has happened for years in Canadian reporting, when in fact nothing untoward has happened. This is a totally normal practice.

● (2225)

Advertising publicly in advance that these events are occurring provides the opportunity for the media to understand and prepare and then report more accurately on the events.

Government Orders

However, of course, every time we go and try to interfere with the type of publication that we are engaging in with respect to political finance reform, we have to recall that under our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, thought, belief, expression, peaceful assembly, and association. All of these are implicated in the political process. They are right there in section 2 of the charter. Of course, these can only be limited, in accordance with section 1, when they can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.

We feel that we have achieved the right balance here. We are not going to require volunteers' names be disclosed or those of minors under 18 years of age. Journalists in the media will not need to be disclosed if they attend events, if the events only cost \$200 or less, either at the event or including all previous donations for the right to acquire a ticket to the event. People providing hospitality and other services at the event will not have their names disclosed. This protects the freedom of association that Canadians hold so dear.

At the same time, for those donors in the over \$200 up to \$1,550 range, there is going to be some public openness and transparency and accountability to provide confidence that nothing untoward has happened, although generally, I think the members of this House will agree that \$1,550 is also quite a low limit.

When it comes to other aspects of the political process that might be interfered with, we will note that during election campaigns, the particular rules about the timing of the promotion of the events will not apply. I think we feel that this would be unduly restrictive.

If we look at the smaller political parties that do not hold seats in this House, we see they do not necessarily have the resources to comply with all the rules in this act. Their access to influence, which could be peddled, is also quite limited. I think everyone would find that it would be fair that they should not have to comply with some of the rules about the promotion of their events, the disclosure of individual attendees, and the amounts donated, provided that they do comply with the limits, of course.

Any donation to a political party of \$200 or more is going to be published, regardless of which party. It is not that Canadians do not have visibility into the electoral financing of the smaller political parties. They do, but this additional administrative burden is going to apply to those who hold seats in the House.

Then there are leadership contests. This is a subject that comes up time and time again in terms of the level of disclosure and the level of accountability in a leadership contest and how that affects the public perception of politics in Canada.

I know right now it is in the media about Mr. O'Leary and whether he appropriately financed his leadership campaign. Although they will not affect Mr. O'Leary or the people who are seeking the role of leader of the New Democratic Party, for future leadership contests, these rules would apply. These rules apply so that Canadians can have the information at their disposal within 30 days of the event to know plainly and simply who attended these events and how much they paid. Canadians themselves can come to an informed decision about whether they feel anything untoward has happened, and they can cast their vote accordingly.

I think we balanced the charter, and I think we have learned about the events of recent history. So much to do has been made about nothing, in some cases. Then, in other cases, there may be a situation where something untoward is happening, and promoting and publishing not only who has paid for tickets but also who is attending events, even if they have not paid for the tickets, would allow the opposition parties and the government party to examine exactly what has happened and if anything untoward is occurring in our political finance system.

I have already mentioned the fact that we are covering off appreciation events. I know that earlier in the debate there was some confusion about that. It seems very clear from my reading of the legislation that appreciation events are covered and that if people attend an appreciation event and their attendance is contingent on a donation that solely or in combination amounts more than \$200, their names will need to be disclosed and published. I think this is appropriate.

I myself found, in connection with my role in political finance reporting as a riding association treasurer and as a treasurer of a provincial party, that those gaps exist. This act does a great job of closing those gaps, not only so that people are fully aware of what is happening and everyone is on an equal footing when it comes to their donations to a political party, but also so that in this place the opposition parties can review the lists and hold the government to account. I think that is an important feature of our democracy.

• (2230)

I know they like to do it almost every question period. This would provide them with a little more information. That is wonderful.

Bringing leadership and nomination campaign expenses in line with the current regime for candidates is an important aspect of the changes to the rules. Another thing that we found in the last election was that the rules associated with nomination contestants and candidates for a campaign and in the leadership contest are all a bit of a smattering and a bit of a mix, in terms of making sure that we have the same coherent information being provided across the political finance spectrum for all the ways in which Canadians are engaging in the process.

We would allow Canadians to have a better sense of what is going on. The more loopholes there are in our law, the more ways there are for people to provide donations and not have their name published, the more it seems there is something wrong with our system, and it lowers the credibility of the system. I think we have managed to close that off here.

I understand that the NDP is at least going to be supporting the bill at this stage. I am very thankful for that. It points to the fact that New Democrats feel the bill addresses something. I know they are asking for more. I look forward to hearing more from the members of the NDP, as to what they would like to see in the bill.

I look forward to hearing from the Conservatives, as well, even though they are not supporting it. They talked earlier about putting on a fig leaf, and I think we are really talking about pulling the fig leaf away. Let us lay everything out on the table. Let us see what is on the table, in terms of donations, and let Canadians make up their minds with respect to the issues that are of importance to them.

Government Orders

This was important to me before I entered politics, and I am glad to see that, now, as a result of the legislation that is being put forward by the minister, we are achieving on our election campaign commitment to make our electoral finance system more open and transparent. That is something that I hope earns the support of all members of the House.

With respect to advertising by political parties on websites, this will be an opportunity. This should not impose too much of an administrative burden on political parties. Most political parties, at least the ones represented in the House, have well-functioning websites that include the opportunity to host and show events. We have not heard anyone stating today that their party would not be able to comply with this aspect of the bill. From a compliance perspective, this should not put any undue cost or burden on the parties. It is something they are able to do already.

Perhaps it is not something that they are always doing, but this would provide a strict and clear standard on what needs to be done in terms of promotion of events on websites, to make sure that everyone is playing ball fairly, and that when events occur, the media know about them in advance, the public knows about them advance, and people are able to make up their own minds as to the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the particular type of event, its location, its costs, and what the party is trying to achieve in hosting it.

In addition to the promotion in advance, there is also an accelerated timeline for reporting the results of the event after it has already occurred. Now there would be a 30-day timeline in which the event organizers would need to provide to the parties the list of the attendees at the event, subject of course to the limits of not reporting minors, volunteers, media, and people providing support to the event; but for all the other attendees of the event, their names need to be provided, along with their addresses, to Elections Canada within 30 days of the event.

I think this is important, because it would provide timely access to information for Canadians. The lack of timeliness of the information is another way by which Canadians lose confidence or faith, or they have a perception that there might be something untoward or inappropriate happening. By accelerating the timelines for this reporting and ensuring that the reporting is done within a month, that would give confidence to Canadians that things truly are on the up and up.

I am sure when Canadians see the results of this bill come forward, if it gets passed in its current form, they will see the benefits of this public reporting. It would help them have confidence that political fundraising is not some type of evil that has to be undone. It is an important part of our political process, and it allows us to do the work we do here every day. It allows Canadians to engage in a fair and balanced way in the political system.

If it has a negative perception as a result of some of the discourse in this place, the bill allows us to overcome that.

• (2235)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to hear the member speak about this piece of legislation, it seems that somehow there is something virtuous about this bill that the Liberals are now proposing. The reality is that the Liberals actually received a

lot of public backlash and media backlash because there really was not anything wrong with fundraising in this country. What was wrong in this circumstance was that the Prime Minister broke his word and the Liberals got caught. They got caught by the media, they got caught by the public, and certainly the opposition held them to account with respect to the cash for access.

I will remind the member again what the Prime Minister wrote: that there should not be preferential access or the perception of preferential access to ministers. What is important to understand about this as well is that he talked about the limited amount of fundraising, but multiples of that limited amount can actually direct ministers, and ministers have a broad range of powers. With the stroke of a pen they can initiate millions of dollars toward a group or organization.

How does the member feel about the Prime Minister's not living up to his direction to his ministers and therefore not living up to his word? Is that not the real reason why we are in this position, dealing with this piece of legislation?

Mr. Nick Whalen: Mr. Speaker, I feel that in fact we are achieving on the goal of openness and transparency by providing timely and complete information to Canadians where they did not previously have timely and complete information, by closing down the loophole on appreciation events, which the Conservatives have already admitted they used greatly to their advantage, and to now know that those people are attending the events but not for any improper purpose. I am not trying to disparage people who engage in the democratic process through fundraising; it is an important aspect of what we do.

However, somehow through this place we have come to malign the people who host fundraisers and we have come to malign the people who attend fundraisers. These people are just trying to engage in our democratic process in a lawful way. This would clarify the law. It is a great piece of legislation, and I thank the Prime Minister and the minister for putting it forward.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am going to try again to follow up on the question from my colleague from the Conservative Party. What we had hoped this bill would do was to address the cash-for-access events, for access to government, to ministers, and to the Prime Minister. We are not talking about people in political parties who are going to fundraisers and participating in those events. I am disappointed that this bill does nothing there. As my colleague mentioned and as the member for Victoria mentioned, the NDP will be supporting the bill, hoping that the government will be open to what would be extensive amendments to what we see in front of us, because it does not address the access and the privilege that people would get when they pay to see ministers of the government.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Mr. Speaker, in addition to the rules that would be set out in the law, there are also rules that each of the parties set for themselves in terms of what they feel is appropriate for their own ministers, whether their own ministers may choose to attend events or not. Therefore, we will see over the course of time how things play out.

Government Orders

With respect to the particular bill, our Prime Minister and our ministers have made themselves available to Canadians for free at public town halls and consultations across this country in a way that we have not seen in generations. It has been fantastic. I know that in my riding of St. John's East we have had town halls on defence, on electoral reform, on the environment, on innovation science and economic development, and on science. They have provided opportunities to Canadians of any walk of life, of any socio-economic class, to come out and meet the minister and be engaged in politics, have their views heard and be listened to, and have those words of Canadian citizens make their way through the consultation process in a way that certainly has not happened in the last decade.

● (2240)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saarnich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, when my friend from St. John's East mentioned that a campaign promise of the Liberals was being fulfilled in Bill C-50, I went back to look at the Liberal platform because as I recall, this was not a campaign promise. The campaign promise on electoral financing would ensure that the loophole of unlimited spending by political parties before the writ drops would be closed, and controlled spending within the writ period.

The more significant campaign promise was that 2015 would be the last election held under first past the post. We must get back to that if the Liberals do not squander a lot of what particularly younger Canadians entrusted when they cast their votes.

Bill C-50 really deals with an almost microscopic issue of the importance of electoral reform and campaign finance reform. This only became an issue because of the optics of cash for access fundraising that conflicted with the Prime Minister's own words.

Bill C-50 would close that loophole, but there are many more important issues with respect to improving democracy in this country than this so-called cash for access piece. Let us be clear. Under our existing laws all donor names have to be published and donations held at \$1,500. This legislation deals with the issue of private fundraising that creates the impression of elite access.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Mr. Speaker, I do not think there was a question there, but I will reiterate the point that this legislation would achieve the goal that my colleague just mentioned of making sure that Canadians understand what is happening at the fundraisers, where they are, who is attending, how much they cost, and they can make up their own minds. Canadians do not need to be regulated to death.

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for St. John's East for his dedication and hard work on this file.

The new BFFs on this side of the House have been labouring mightily to fabricate concerns around these fundraisers really under two headings as I can see. First, the member for St. John's East dispensed with it quite handily, and that was the inability of funds in the amount of \$1,550 to influence any reasonable member of Parliament. That could never happen of course. That leaves what must be the secondary concern, which would be what is discussed at these events, with whom, and how that might give influence to decisions down the line.

I wonder if the member took note that on Tuesday, June 6, Kady O'Malley wrote, "When you get down to it, the prospect of publicly available invite lists should have a wonderfully clarifying effect on the judgment of any minister—or ministerial staffer...in deciding which events might cross the line and create at least the perception of a conflict of interest."

Would the member agree with her conclusion that this would mollify any concerns about undue influence of deep-pocketed donors?

Mr. Nick Whalen: Mr. Speaker, I obviously agree with that. In fact, it was the nature of what we discussed. By providing this information, Canadians will have an opportunity to see what is going on. It will also provide information to ministers and their staff to know what is appropriate and not appropriate. Canadians can make up their own minds, because Canadians do not need to be patronized. They are intelligent people, and they can look at the information and make an informed decision.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to belabour the point that the real reason we are here tonight on both Bill C-24 and Bill C-50 is because of miscalculations on the part of the Prime Minister. In the first instance, he promised gender parity in cabinet, and suddenly realized he did not have it. On this piece, he is giving in to his Liberal instincts.

Why is there nothing in Bill C-50 that would address third-party financing? That is the big elephant in the room. Third-party groups have unduly influenced elections, especially the last one. Why is there nothing in Bill C-50 that would address that?

● (2245)

Mr. Nick Whalen: Mr. Speaker, while the member asked an interesting question, I cannot really comment as to what is not in the bill. What is in the bill is fantastic. The bill addresses loopholes that I myself had noted when I was involved as a volunteer for the political party in terms of unfair treatment of different types of political financing.

The member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston thought that the bill would not close the loophole the Conservatives used to have cash-for-access fundraising through the back door and their appreciation events, but it does in fact close that loophole, and now Canadians will have the necessary information to make an informed decision as to whether or not influence is being bought. I think they will find that it is not.

Government Orders

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is time we had an honest discussion of what the bill is actually about. I have heard Liberal speakers talk about chapter and detail of what it is about, and that there was no problem. I just heard from the Liberal ranks saying there was no problem to be solved. If there is no problem to be solved, why are we having a bill? The problem to be solved by the admission of the Liberal Party was a scandal called cash-for-access fundraising. It was hitting the news. It was making stories, and the Liberals promised to deal with the problem. The bill is said to be the response to that problem.

I thought it very telling that the member for St. John's East said there are rules that the parties set for themselves. That was a description of the bill. This is a bill where the Liberals are setting rules for themselves. This is not solving the problem of cash-for-access fundraisers. This is not stopping cash for access fundraisers. This is a bill that formalizes the process of cash-for-access fundraisers. This is a bill that legalizes cash-for-access fundraisers.

Some know I have been involved in political parties and campaigns for a few years, 42 to be exact. I know a thing or two about fundraising. I know a thing or two about running campaigns. Make no mistake, the bill is about formalizing and instituting a system of cash-for-access fundraisers. That is what it does. That is what it is all about.

It is not surprising Liberals want to, as the hon. member said, set rules for themselves about fundraising, and that this is what they are doing here. The Liberals have a long history of fundraising problems and scandals. Some of it in very recent history. I recall it was not long ago that the Minister of Justice, keep in mind the justice minister is responsible for appointing every senior judge in this country, held a fundraiser and invited lawyers. They were to be given unprecedented access, and it was even held at a major Toronto law firm.

If an individual is a lawyer and applying to become a judge, and being told to come to a fundraiser, I think the message is loud and clear. That judgeship applicant might want to show up. Not surprisingly, we have seen a raft of appointments recently that happened to coincide with the fact these people were very generous donors to the Liberal Party. Is there any doubt what was going on at that fundraiser by the Minister of Justice targeted to lawyers?

I was part of the Harper government, where as a minister for many years, I was actually, by the ethics rules we thought and by our practice, prohibited from raising money from the stakeholders in my portfolio. Prohibited. The Ethics Commissioner told us those were the rules. We could not do it, and we did not do it. Here, the Liberal Party is making it a formal practice, and having been called out on it, the solution is simple, the Liberals will pass a law, formalize it, and say this is the system. Then, when anyone says there is a problem, tell me if we have heard this in question period, we are following the rules. What rules are we following? These are rules the party is setting for themselves as the hon. member for St. John's East said. These are the rules they are going to follow.

That will be the answer, and when the Ethics Commissioner says she does not like the appearance of undue influence and cash for access, Liberals are going to say they are following the rules. They are setting up a system, and everyone who comes has to show up, be

on the list, advertise it publicly, and so on, but having done all that, it is okay for Liberals to raise money from stakeholders, and sell the access of the minister's ear, so that people can whisper their requests. If they are lobbying, the minister is there if they have paid their ticket price to the Liberal Party.

● (2250)

That is what the bill is about, and that is why it is wholly unacceptable. It is unacceptable in a free and democratic society where we pretend that everybody has equal access, because it is not equal access. It is cash for access. Cash for access to the decision-makers who can make a difference in the success or failure of people's ventures, and we have seen that. It was not just the people who want to become judges.

The Prime Minister, we learned, went to a fundraiser or a private home, targeting a particular community. One of those at that fundraiser was somebody named Shenglin Xian. He had an interest, an application to the federal government for a bank. He made the maximum donation to the party, and got a lot of his friends to come to this fundraiser too, to make those maximum donations to the party. They all got to talk to the Prime Minister, got their pictures taken with the Prime Minister, and talked to the Prime Minister about the things in which they had a financial interest, about things from which they would profit by a decision made by the government. What happened? Not long after that fundraiser, Mr. Xian got his approval from the federal government. That is part of the scandal that led to the bill. That is part of the problem that has been solved by the bill.

Let us go back and see what happens. Is there anything in the bill that would stop the exact same thing from happening again? Is there anything that would discourage it, because that maximum donation to the party is publicly disclosed anyhow. No, this is a smoke and mirrors formalization of cash-for-access fundraising, a legalization and a way to say to the public, to the people in the House, to the media and to the Ethics Commissioner, "It is none of your business. We are following the rules." The rules that parties set for themselves, as the Liberal member said, and that is what this is.

That is why this is so unacceptable. Mr. Xian was not the only one at that cash-for-access fundraiser. Another gentleman gave \$1 million to the Trudeau Foundation, after attending an exclusive, in a private home, cash-for-access fundraiser. He did not give money to any other groups. He did not give money to the Manning Centre, no. He went to a fundraiser with the Prime Minister and gave money to the Trudeau Foundation, \$1 million. He did not give money to anybody else. He was not having a private cash-for-access fundraiser with anybody else, he was having it with the Prime Minister, and the money flowed to the Trudeau Foundation.

Government Orders

There were other attendees at that event who acknowledged they raised government business with the Prime Minister. They said they lobbied the Prime Minister about things they cared about, interests that they had with the government. The Prime Minister even admitted it. He acknowledged that he had been lobbied at that event, and this will make it all go away because what? Can anybody point me to one provision in the bill that will stop that fundraiser and those discussions from happening? There is none. All it will do is stop the criticism of that inappropriate, unethical, virtually corrupt form of fundraising, and it is something that is happening, not to solve the problem, it is happening to solve the Liberals' fundraising problem.

Let us ask, where did this come from? Why was it that the media was suddenly interested in Liberal fundraising? No one was standing there for a long time. They had not been. It turns out the Ontario Liberals, some of whom have suddenly migrated to Ottawa, the people who used to run the Premier's office, who used to run the Liberal Party in Ontario, are now running the federal Liberal Party. What did they do when they were in Ontario? They had something that was described by Liberal insiders and Liberal cabinet ministers as a system. It was a system of cash-for-access fundraising, and this is how the Liberal Party of Ontario was funded. Each minister was assigned targets. If an individual was the minister of finance, somebody like Charles Sousa, the minister would sign an annual target of half a million dollars.

• (2255)

They were given a list of the stakeholders, the people they would be dealing with, the folks they would be making decisions about. They would be told to forget about themselves and their riding associations. Gerald Butts and Katie Telford were in the premier's office. Now they are in the Prime Minister's Office. They would be told to go out for the Liberal Party of Ontario. If a member wanted to remain a minister, he or she would have to raise half a million dollars from stakeholders and turn it over to the Liberal Party caucus. The job was to hold the fundraisers, give the access, collect the cash. That was the system.

It turns out that Eric Hoskins, the health minister, had the exact same target of half a million dollars a year. He had to hold fundraisers at long-term care homes with the Ontario Long Term Care Association and folks like that, and bring in money.

All the folks on the backbench over there think the way to be a minister is to always follow the party whip. This law is about putting in place a new system for them. That is what the Liberals did in Ontario. It is real simple. They should not worry about the whip. They are given a target and are told to bring in money. If they perform, they will get to be in cabinet. That was the system in Ontario. It became a bit of a scandal, understandably.

I know a lot of people are smiling on the Liberal benches because they think this is funny. However, it is not funny; it is corruption. It is what discredits politics in our country. When people think the worst of politics, it is what they think the country is about. It is the system of the Liberal Party, of Gerald Butts, of Katie Telford, and it is the system they are bringing here. It is the system that this bill will legalize, formalize, put in place, and keep rolling, but with much bigger stakes and much bigger dollars. People should think about that.

One of my friends across the way is heckling about one of two cases in a decade of Conservative government, where there was an issue for cash for access. Oddly, both of them happened in that very Conservative sector, the arts sector. One was with a minister, the other with a parliamentary secretary. In both cases, they attended events that they thought were just meetings with folks in the arts sector. Somebody went around the room and collected cheques. All that money was returned of their own initiative. Why? Because that was the Conservative practice: no cash for access.

Those were the only two examples in that arts sector, which was so cozy with the Conservatives. This undermines the fact that these were unsolicited funds that were returned instantly on the initiative of the Conservatives because it was wrong. The hon. member knows it is wrong and that is why he is raising it. However, he will vote for a bill that makes it legal and formal to do that kind of stuff. The hon. member who is heckling me thinks it is wrong, but will vote for a bill that formalizes it.

Should that not trouble everybody? Did Prime Minister Stephen Harper ever hold any? He avoided it by one simple mechanism: he did not hold fundraisers and did not attend fundraisers. In a decade in office, he attended one fundraiser. It was in Montreal, with over 1,000 people. It was not a cash-for-access intimate event in the kitchen of one of his friends who had an interest; it was one with 1,000 people. Even then he stopped it. Why? There could be no question whatsoever of unethical or corrupt conduct, the kind that would be formalized in this bill.

Let us talk more about the Ontario system.

Energy minister Bob Chiarelli was consistently turning in a quarter to a third of a million dollars a year. That was his target. He held one private dinner with one group of stakeholders in the energy sector. The premier went to it. This little private dinner in a restaurant turned up \$100,000 alone. That was the Liberal cash-for-access system.

• (2300)

Dwight Duncan, a former Liberal finance minister of Ontario, has this to say about the system. He was assigned the target of a million dollars. He said, "One of the reasons I quit...I was so sick of it." That system is what the people on the government side are proposing we support, formalize, and legalize.

John Gerretsen, the attorney general, father of the Liberal member for Kingston and the Islands, said this about the Liberal system of cash for access. He said he was troubled by the conflict of interest aspects, "If a major issue comes up, and you have been funded by lobbyists on behalf of any kind of industry, you're going to be affected by that...it's human nature."

Government Orders

It is human nature to be influenced by it. Unfortunately, it is Liberal nature to do it, to always conduct cash-for-access fundraising. Now, they have created a system that legalizes it and formalizes it, and somehow in the whole process are pretending they are doing something virtuous.

Of course there was the exposé of what was being done in Ontario, and I credit those Liberal insiders and former ministers who exposed it, because otherwise we would not know today that they literally had a formal system. They identified stakeholders, raised the money from them, and did it. That is why it became an issue when suddenly those folks from Queen's Park came to Ottawa and the same kind of fundraising began to appear here. It had not been here under the previous government, but suddenly, there it was. The Prime Minister was holding intimate gatherings. People were making maximum donations. They were bringing along 10 or 20 of their friends. In the states they call that bundling. They were bundling to make those maximum contributions. They were discussing government business.

Is there anything in the bill that would stop that? Is there anything in the bill that would prevent lobbying at these exclusive cash-for-access events? No, there is not. We are formalizing and legalizing how it is done. "Come on up, pay your \$1,500, and have your say with the minister, and then get your way maybe down the road." That is what the bill is all about.

The Liberals are back in business. They are back in Ottawa. Some will remember the "Sky Shops" scandal. Some will remember the sponsorship scandal, and I could go on and on through history. It has always been there. It has always been the Liberal way.

We are going to get money based on the principles we stand for, standing for, as Conservatives do, our belief in smaller government. The NDP believes in bigger government. They think that is the solution. People support us for both those reasons. However, for the Liberal Party, there is a challenge. When they do not believe anything, how do they get money? They get money by selling access, by selling favourable decisions, by giving people what they want in exchange for cash. That, simply put, is political corruption. Anywhere I come from, that is what it is.

I am proud to be part of a political party that has avoided those things. I was very proud to be part of a government where it simply did not happen, a government where the money came in small amounts from people all across the country who simply believed in what we cared about. I never attended, held, or saw anything remotely like a cash-for-access fundraiser in my entire time in government as a member of Parliament on the Conservative Party side, but as soon as the government changed, the Ontario system was here.

What did they do to solve it in Ontario? They actually banned cash-for-access fundraisers. The Ontario Liberals acknowledged it was wrong and banned it. It was a little awkward. They went overboard and said MPs, candidates, opposition individual MPs cannot be there. It is a little excessive, but it actually solves the problem and bans it. They did not do that with the federal Liberal approach, which is to formalize it, legalize it, and set up a system.

The Liberals want to continue the practice here in Ottawa. The way they are going to continue the practice is by building bulletproof, iron-clad defences: "We addressed the problem. We passed a law. We are following the law. We are doing exactly what the law says one does if collecting cash for access."

● (2305)

That is not a solution to the problem. That is an increase in the problem. That is an acceleration of the problem. That is the practice of politics the way Liberals have always done it, and the way it seems they want to do it into the future. That is unacceptable to Conservatives. That is unacceptable to Canadians.

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to say two things. One, we are in Ottawa, not Toronto, just to clear up the geography. Two, the sanctimony coming from the other side is a bit rich.

I just want to remind the member opposite we are hearing of this panacea, this wonderful experience of perfectness that came from the former government in terms of fundraising. There is a gentleman who lives in my riding, and the member might remember his name, Dean Del Mastro. He served time in prison for illegal fundraising as a parliamentary secretary to the former prime minister Stephen Harper.

I would also like to mention that the hon. member across the way has in fact made the argument for the bill. Does the member know who donated to the former prime minister Stephen Harper's nomination campaign in 2004? My guess is no, but under the bill we all would.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, none of what the hon. member raised had anything to do with cash for access.

The problem we are talking about, and that the bill was supposed to solve, is cash-for-access fundraisers. Mr. Del Mastro faced consequences for his acts. The Liberals are now going to have a structure to allow their acts. Mr. Del Mastro never promised anybody anything. He never made himself available to lobbyists. However, the Liberals will now be formally available to anybody wanting to lobby for an outcome or a decision from the government. It is all going to be there. Anybody who has an interest could pay money, all the rules for fundraisers would be followed, and it would be the law. That is what the bill would do.

It is the Liberal Party making rules for themselves to enable and allow the continuation of an essentially corrupt practice.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to apologize to the people watching us on television because I really feel like we are getting lost in the debate. I have been in the House for six years. I arrived when the Conservatives came to power after the Liberal scandals.

What did the Conservatives do? Year after year, they raised the contribution limits because doing so gave them an advantage. The Conservatives abolished public funding because doing so gave them an advantage. Now that the Liberals are in power, they are normalizing a totally unacceptable practice and trying to ram it down our throats because it will give them an advantage.

Government Orders

I want to ask my colleague when he thinks we will see a publicly funded election. I think people know that democracy comes at a cost, and they are prepared to pay it. Instead of serving political parties, that would serve democracy.

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member who asked me the question knows that the taxpayers refunded 60% of what he spent on his last election campaign. They funded 60% of his election campaign on a rebate. Before that, everybody who gave \$200 to his campaign got \$150 back on a tax credit. That is pretty generous.

When I look at that, the cumulative aspect of those contributions and those rebates, members are getting pretty close to 90% of their political campaigns paid for by the taxpayers. That is not too bad. That is a pretty good number. When the member says there is not enough public funding, what does he want raised? Should it be more than 60% that would be rebated? Should the tax credit be more than 75%? It is not that high in the charitable sector. These are very generous public funding aspects that exist in the law.

That is not the concern here. The concern here is that this is not enough for the Liberals. The Liberals are saying that even with that kind of generous taxpayer support, they still need to have the right to allow people who want something from government to be able to go up to the Prime Minister or the minister, pay \$1,500, and ask for what they want in return from the government. We are going to put it—

• (2310)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking my hon. colleague for his remarks, though I must say I disagree with the vast majority of what he said and I feel compelled to clear the record.

Let us begin with the most important principle here: it is that every member on this side of the House follows the rules when it comes to fundraising. We follow the rules, and I feel compelled—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Marco Mendicino: I know my colleagues are heckling on the other side, Mr. Speaker.

However, I also feel compelled to remind my hon. colleague that the Ethics Commissioner concluded her investigation without any finding.

My colleague went on about his time in government and he went on about the record, though his tone seemed a bit strained, because even he conceded that in his previous government two of his colleagues breached the rules, not once but twice. On this side, we are proud of how we are raising the bar when it comes to openness and transparency, not only when it comes to fundraising but when it comes to access to information and when it comes to things like publishing the mandate letters, which the previous Conservative government had every chance to do but failed to do.

Will my hon. colleague not agree that the real reason he will not support this bill is that it reminds him of all of the missed

opportunities and failures of his previous government, while it reminds every Canadian how we are succeeding when it comes to fundraising and ethics, openness, and transparency?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Leave it to the hon. member to defend the indefensible, Mr. Speaker, a bill that formalizes the Ontario Liberal system whereby the Minister of Finance has a quota of half a billion dollars from his stakeholders and the Minister of Health has a quota of half a billion dollars a year from the stakeholders for the Liberal Party. That is what cash for access was, and that is what this bill would establish as a legal system.

When there was doubt in the past, when the Ethics Commissioner could say something was wrong, there is a really easy answer once this bill is passed: “We follow the rules.” Who just said that? The hon. member said, “We will follow the rules.” Why? It is because, as the member for St. John's East said, there are rules that the parties set for themselves, and that is what this is. The rule the Liberal Party is setting for itself is to collect cash for access. The Liberals are the only ones with ministers and parliamentary secretaries, like him and like his minister, who have held cash-for-access fundraisers. They are the only ones who can do that and actually deliver access to ministers and people who can make decisions, so of course he wants to have a set of rules that allow that, because that is the Liberal system.

Their response is not what the Ontario Liberals had to do, which was to shut down cash for access; their response is to legalize and formalize cash for access. I am getting tired of saying it, but I am not as tired as Canadians are going to be after they see it under way.

For a while—for a couple of years, maybe—“we are following the rules” will work as an answer, but it did not work in Ontario. People figured out that the rules were made to facilitate that kind of Liberal corruption, and the chickens came home to roost.

That is what is going to happen to the Liberal Party here. They can formalize the system, but at the end of the day it is a corrupt system. They can legalize the system, but when it is a corrupt system, Canadians will not stand for it, and eventually, sooner or later, they will pay attention and find it unacceptable. Then the Liberal Party will pay the price for having made that critical decision to disrespect the fundamental principles of clean government and create a corrupt fundraising system and a law under which it can conduct it.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for a reminder of what this bill is about and what it is not about.

I wonder if my colleague has the concerns that I have and that I alluded to in my comments. I agree entirely with him. Not only are we entrenching this corrupt system and putting a happy face on it by the transparency point, but that very transparency will allow the government to know who attended, for example, a Conservative fundraiser, and therefore a person who was found to have attended could be punished when he or she wanted a government position because it is all going to be on the Internet. Does that feature cause any concerns to the hon. member?

Government Orders

• (2315)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I will differ with my friend. I am not that concerned about that, because that risk already exists. The risk already exists, because we have public disclosure of contributions. Whether it is in real time or over the longer term, it does not make a difference. It is the same reason that these rules will not make a difference. It is exactly the same reason. That the rules will be formalized will not make a difference.

What matters, though, is the attitude. What is clear is that when a party is that hungry for money that it is willing to entrench a system, which is fundamentally corrupt, in the structure and way it operates, yes, Liberals probably are that vindictive. If they care about the money that much that, instead of doing what the Ontario Liberals did and shutting it down, they are doing the opposite by formalizing and legalizing it, they probably care enough to check out those annual disclosures. It is not going to be because of this bill; they are probably already doing it.

The message is loud and clear. When it is stakeholders to whom one goes and from whom one raises money, the message is loud and clear that who one gives money to matters. I used to be in a law firm, and partners would say they had been asked for so many dollars from so-and-so and thought they should attend an event because it was a certain minister. No, absolutely not. However, when it is formalized as a system, that kind of corruption becomes entrenched. That is what the Liberals are proposing to do.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise tonight and speak to Bill C-50 or, as I like to refer to it, the “got caught with my hand in the cookie jar so I’m going to blame the cookie jar act”, because that is exactly what the Liberals are trying to do with this legislation. They knew what the rules were. They knew what the rules were all along. Then they just broke them. They continued to break them. Then they got caught. Now they are trying to put up a bit of a cover for that. They did this for months. They went on and on with it. They showed no remorse. They did not seem to have any feelings of guilt. However, when they were caught, they decided that it was the rules’ fault and not their fault. That is where we are today.

I guess we could look at it the way my colleague, the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge, put it. He told me this legislation was designed to stop the Liberals from doing what they have been doing. Maybe it would just be easier if they just stopped doing it. What is even worse is this legislation would not even stop them from doing it. It is just a cover. When people forget about the cash-for-access scandals, they will just quietly start doing it again. This legislation really would not do anything to stop it.

Let me back up a bit and take us to where we started with all of this, or where they started with all of this. In November 2015, very shortly after the Liberals formed government, the Prime Minister issued some directives. These directives were titled, “Open and Accountable Government.” I suspect if anyone is watching tonight, they are probably chuckling a bit at that, because it does sound amusing to hear that title, given what we have seen from the Liberal government in the year and a half to two years it has been in power. However, I do not want us to get too distracted by that because it is a bit amusing. There is no question about that.

However, under “Annex B” of that directive, “Fundraising and Dealing with Lobbyists: Best Practices for Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries”, the Prime Minister outlines three general principles that he said must be followed. I will read them:

Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries must ensure that political fundraising activities or considerations do not affect, or appear to affect, the exercise of their official duties or the access of individuals or organizations to government.

There should be no preferential access to government, or appearance of preferential access, accorded to individuals or organizations because they have made financial contributions to politicians and political parties.

There should be no singling out, or appearance of singling out, of individuals or organizations as targets of political fundraising because they have official dealings with Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries, or their staff or departments.

When we start thinking about that, they have broken all three of those multiple times.

Of particular note is the second principle that talks about preferential access to government by donors of political parties. Let us look at the Liberal record of upholding that principle as it pertains to the rules laid out in the Conflict of Interest Act.

In April 2016, the Minister of Justice attended a \$500-a-ticket fundraiser at Torys LLP offices, in Toronto. Several of the law firm’s members were registered to lobby the federal government, including a senior member who was registered to lobby the justice department. How, in any universe, is that not a conflict of interest? The Minister of Justice has a duty, not only to be independent, but also to be perceived as independent, which was very clearly compromised by that fundraiser.

What was discussed at this fundraiser? Did the lawyers who were present lobby the minister to advance their interests? Did the interests of those lawyers go further than the ones who did not contribute to the Liberal Party? At the time this was discovered, the Liberal Party refused to say who was in attendance at the event. That information only became public once it was posted on Elections Canada’s website.

• (2320)

It is actually interesting that the Liberals feel the need to change the law to make sure that attendees at ministerial fundraisers remain public, because when given the chance, they refuse to do so themselves. It goes back to the principle that it would be easier to just stop doing what they are doing. They do not have to change the law to stop doing it; they just need to stop doing it. They know it is wrong, so they should not keep doing it.

Government Orders

How about the fundraiser the finance minister attended in Halifax in October, where corporate executives paid \$1,500 each to attend? How about when the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Justice, who was the Prime Minister's point person on legalizing marijuana, headlined a private Liberal fundraiser, attended by a marijuana lobbying group, at a law office in Toronto that advises clients in the cannabis business? Seriously, this stuff can not be made up. I know the Liberals eventually returned the donation from the marijuana lobbyist. They acknowledged what was obvious, that it was clearly a conflict of interest, but they only did so when the fundraising event became a media story. In other words, it was when they got caught. Again, they put their hand in the cookie jar, someone caught them, and they were trying to blame the cookie jar.

Because of all of this, we know that Liberal ministers and parliamentary secretaries cannot, or maybe will not, and are not following simple ethical rules when it comes to fundraising.

I am sure the Prime Minister must have been incredibly disappointed when members of his own government not only broke the conflict of interest rules but also the very rules he created himself called "Open and Accountable Government". Hold on. Was he disappointed? As it turns out, in May of last year, the Prime Minister was a guest star at a \$1,500 Liberal Party cash-for-access fundraiser at the mansion of a wealthy Chinese Canadian business executive. One of the guests in attendance was a donor who was seeking approval from the federal government to begin operating a new bank in Canada. Another guest at the event made a sizable donation to the Pierre Elliot Trudeau Foundation. It was \$50,000 to build a statue of the former prime minister himself just weeks after the event. It was just a pure coincidence, I am sure.

It looks like it was not just his cabinet that was breaking his rules. The Prime Minister himself broke his own rules when it came to political fundraising, which is why I do not know how anyone can take this bill seriously. Again, if they want to stop doing it, they just have to stop doing it.

We all know what it really is. It is just a smoke screen they are putting up to make it seem like they are being accountable. They like to talk, but they do not really like to follow through with action. It is all talk and no action. It is just a smoke and mirrors situation, just like everything else they do.

If they really want to be accountable, they do not need a bill to do so. They could just stop selling access to the government for cash. They could voluntarily provide the list of attendees at their fundraising events. They could ensure that the Prime Minister and other members of cabinet were not in a conflict of interest when they attended partisan events. A new law is not going to make their cash-for-access fundraisers ethical. It just will not do that.

If the Prime Minister wanted to end cash for access, all he ever had to do, and all he still has to do, is stop doing these fundraisers. It is that simple. It does not take legislation.

Bending the rules so the Prime Minister can keep charging \$1,500 for wealthy individuals to meet with him and discuss government business is still wrong. It will always be wrong. That is clear. What else is clear are the rules. Why do the Liberals not just start following the rules like everyone else?

Here is the answer. It is because they are not open, they are not transparent, and they definitely have no intention of actually being accountable. They like to talk about it, but they certainly do not want to walk the walk. It seems like this is a pattern with these Liberals. It is a pattern with all Liberals, but certainly with these ones. They do not want to be accountable to Canadians.

● (2325)

Remember just a few months ago when the government House leader introduced her quite ironically titled discussion paper on changes to the Standing Orders. It became obvious very soon after that a discussion was actually the last thing the Liberal Party wanted and they tried to ram those changes through the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, with no discussion, no debate, no questions and answers, and without unanimous consent.

Let us try to remember some of the changes they were trying to force through and I am sure they are going to continue to try to force through. They want to take every Friday off. Canadians work five days a week, at least. Why does the Prime Minister and the Liberal government think that they are more entitled than average Canadians? It is a pattern with them again. They seem to think they are entitled.

Really, I think they want to avoid scrutiny from the opposition parties, the media, and therefore Canadians. Why show up and be held accountable five days a week when they can try to get away with just four? They will try to get away with cash for access. Why not try to get away with fewer days to be held accountable?

Furthermore, the Liberals proposed that the Prime Minister only attend question period once a week. I realize the Prime Minister does not actually answer questions when he comes to question period anyway, but that does not mean he should not show up most days. He should be expected to show up so that people can see him not answering the questions. What would that mean? With the schedule of the House of Commons and his showing up and answering questions one time a week, it boils down to his answering questions for as little as 25 hours in an entire year. That is on the weeks he shows up at all, because last week we did not see him once.

Some of the other changes that were being proposed by the Liberals were designed to limit and handcuff the opposition, essentially to not allow them to do their jobs to full capacity. These changes would have diminished Parliament and they largely would have stripped the opposition of the power to hold the Prime Minister and his government to account. There it is again, the lack of wanting to be accountable.

Government Orders

What is worse than the outrageous changes they tried to make, which I am sure will continue, is the fact that they tried to ram these changes through a Liberal dominated committee without the consent of all political parties. This was an unprecedented move that had not been seen before in Canadian democracy. It had been a long-standing tradition in Parliament that any changes to the way the House of Commons operates must have unanimous consent from all the major parties represented in the House.

That entire standing order debacle made it quite clear that the Prime Minister has absolutely no respect for democracy. The Liberals only backed down after Canadians let them know that they would not stand for it. Again, the Liberals get away with it as long as they can and when they are called out on it, they try to find some way to weasel out of it.

During the procedure and House affairs committee, I had the opportunity to read hundreds of emails from Canadians who were upset and very angry that the Liberals were trying to subvert democracy in such a way. An e-petition that was created on March 23, collected over 30,000 signatures pretty much over a weekend.

I am happy and proud that Canadians became so engaged in our parliamentary process, but it should not have had to come to that. The Liberals should have known better, just like they should know better when it comes to cash-for-access fundraisers. I know they do know better. They think they can get away with it and that is just plain wrong.

The Liberal government members should be accountable, should be open, and should be transparent on their own, not only when there is public outcry. It should not take public outcry to make them appear to be accountable, open, and transparent. They should just be doing it, but that is not the Liberal way.

● (2330)

There is another parallel I can draw. We have heard it mentioned a couple of times tonight already, but this bill deals with a problem that the Liberals have created themselves, which they could just stop doing. They do not need a bill to stop doing it. There are all kinds of serious matters that are potential threats to our democracy that they could be dealing with. A great example of this is third-party spending during elections. I will take a moment to talk about that glaring issue.

The commissioner of elections told the Senate committee the following:

We have received a significant number of complaints about the involvement of third parties in connection with the 2015 general election. And I would add we received many more complaints than had been filed with respect to the previous election in 2011.

Common to many of these complaints was the perception that third parties, in some ridings, were so significantly involved in the electoral contest that this resulted in unfair electoral outcomes.

I would suggest that third-party engagement in Canada's electoral process will likely continue to grow. For that reason, it may be time for Parliament to re-examine the third-party regime....

The previous electoral officer, Marc Mayrand, also testified that a registered third party can accept and use foreign money during a Canadian electoral campaign and that, further, there is no limit to the amount it can spend, except on advertising. The current election law only regulates third-party activities that are directly related to

advertising. Therefore, Elections Canada does not define things like surveys, election-related websites, calling services, push polls, and other things to communicate with electors as advertising. Once the funds are mingled in with an organization in Canada or from outside of Canada, it is within their funds and they can use those funds in an unlimited amount, the way it is now.

The commissioner further stated:

In Canada, third parties are only regulated with respect to their election advertising activities. Provided they act independently from a candidate or party, they may incur limitless amounts of expenses when carrying out activities such as polling, voter contact services, promotional events, etc. They can also use whatever sources of funding—including foreign funds—to finance these non-election advertising activities.

The level of third party engagement in Canada's electoral process will likely continue to grow in the years to come. For that reason, Parliament should consider whether there is a need to re-examine the third-party regime, with a view to maintaining a level playing field for all participants.

Does no one on the government side find those statements in any way concerning? They should.

The commissioner of Canada elections is saying that Parliament needs to be looking at changing the third-party regime to ensure the integrity of Canadian elections. Instead, the Liberals are introducing legislation to police themselves because the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party got caught with their hands in the cookie jar. Instead, they could be dealing with something that would ensure the integrity of elections. That is what we should be doing. In fact, on this one, the Minister of Democratic Institutions is turning a blind eye and pretending that this has not even been flagged as an issue. It was said by the commissioner of Canada elections, nonetheless.

During question period in the Senate recently, the minister testified on foreign funding in third-party spending during elections, and stated:

From the experience we have, we have found that this is not something that is currently present and so significant that it would impact the electoral system or the confidence that Canadians have during a writ period or during an election.

She also said, "there's very little evidence to suggest that foreign money is influencing Canadian elections by third parties." It seems to be quite different from what the commissioner had to say, quite different. I will point out that just because the minister is turning a blind eye does not mean this is not a glaring issue. As the minister's mandate letter famously put it, "Sunshine is the best disinfectant to concerns about our political process." Why is she not shining a little light on this issue? Is this issue not in need of a little sunshine? Why do we not deal with that? It is not dealt with in Bill C-33 and it is not dealt with in Bill C-50, which we have before us today.

● (2335)

At the end of the day, Liberal members opposite can use all the platitudes they want. They can claim all they want to be open, transparent, and accountable, but Canadians are certainly growing tired of their games. Canadians are seeing the Liberal government for what it really is: the same party that brought us the sponsorship scandal, only with slightly better hair and maybe some really snappy socks.

Government Orders

The Liberals got caught breaking the rules, and changing the rules does not make them any less guilty. They still broke the rules, and they continue to break the rules. It is time for that to change.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what has been going on here? We have had legislation presented. It is up for debate and public scrutiny.

Pierre Poutine must be absolutely rolling over, wherever he is hiding right now. Hey, that did not happen. No, instead we had somebody led away in handcuffs and leg irons. We had in-and-out scandals. We had stuff going on that was really hard to figure out. In the absence of rules, we had Mike Duffy and Nigel Wright. However, the paragons of virtue over there certainly had to take the time to harass the charities that may have had something to say in the democratic process.

Now we have a party that has the social conservative boot on its throat, calling the shots, and where is the transparency there? How could they have the chutzpah to get up and lecture this side of the House, when even their most recent history is littered with all manner of malfeasance and criminal activity that has been proven?

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, I do not even know where to start with that. Is this guy over there for real? Is he for real?

He asks what is going on. I will tell you what is going on. The Liberal Party is selling access to the government for cash. That is what is going on. I will tell you right now that this legislation is just a smokescreen to cover up the fact that the Prime Minister of this country is corrupt. That is unacceptable. If they want to try to put up a smokescreen and try to pretend that they are somehow being accountable, what a joke. You guys are a joke. It is a complete farce.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: We are going to continue to make sure that the commentary, questions, and speeches and the like are directed to the Chair. We are going to do that in the third person sense of things. We are going to avoid those “you” words.

Now we are going to go to questions and comments.

• (2340)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I must say that despite the late hour, I am really enjoying the debate at this point. We get to hear the Liberals list the past scandals of the Conservative Party and the Conservatives list the past scandals of the Liberal Party. For the New Democratic Party, it is really enlightening to have a reminder of the records of both parties on these questions.

My question for the hon. member is one that we posed earlier. We have concerns about this bill, but we are prepared to vote for it, send it to committee, and try to make a bill that works for all Canadians.

My question is this: can the hon. member tell us if the Liberal Party is willing to work with other parties to improve this bill or not?

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question. I do not know.

We have not seen much willingness from the Liberal Party to work with opposition members on much of anything. I mentioned the Standing Orders in my speech, and they were just trying to ram

those down our throats, so it seems to be kind of a pattern. The Liberals are trying to pretend they are open and trying to pretend they are accountable, but they are certainly proving to be anything but. They are all talk and no action. There is no doubt about that.

I can stand here all night listing examples of the government saying one thing and doing another. This Prime Minister is the biggest phony I have ever seen in my life. I will tell the Liberals right now that Canadians are starting to see through that. They are starting to realize just what a phony the Prime Minister is. He talks a big game, but he sure does not deliver. Canadians are going to see right through that. In the next election, they are going—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. In the course of debate here, I would ask hon. members to avoid individual characterizations of hon. members that are bordering on the edge of unparliamentary language. I would caution members to avoid the edges of that and to keep decorum the way it should be and the way members expect it to be.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I assume the member's memory is very short. Perhaps he was not a member of Parliament when Canadians were paying attention in 2009. Perhaps I should remind him. One of the leadership candidates, the member for Milton, was minister of natural resources at the time. Let me remind him what happened at the time, because they talk about cash for access. Cash for access is when a lobbyist is caught organizing a fundraiser. Let me remind the member what that was in 2009.

Michael McSweeney worked for the Cement Association of Canada. He was caught by the lobbying commissioner for organizing a fundraiser for the member for Milton. He actually was fined. The member for Milton is still standing at the front gate. The leader of the official opposition is promoting that kind of behaviour.

Could the member accept that this type of behaviour is unacceptable? We know that on this side of the House, no one was caught and shackled, and no one was caught by the lobbying commissioner.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asks what cash for access is. We know what it is. I think he would probably be the biggest expert, having worked at Queen's Park, where this was imported from.

I find it quite pathetic what we hear from the Liberals over and over. We are hearing it again tonight. We hear it from the Prime Minister and ministers in question period every day. They try to deflect everything by saying the Conservatives were terrible. It is because they do not want anyone to pay attention to all the stuff they are doing right now that is putting the country into a huge deficit and is ruining our democracy.

They are trying to avoid being held accountable. They are trying to avoid having the sun shone on them. Even when there is nothing there, they say, “The bad Conservatives. Everything is their fault.”

They are in charge, and they are ruining the finances of the country, so maybe the member wants to look at himself—

• (2345)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Signal Hill.

Government Orders

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if my memory serves me correctly, the Liberals took a hiatus at the end of the last calendar year from these cash-for-access events, because they were caught. They took a hiatus and said they were going to draft legislation. What happened in the first quarter of 2017 was that their fundraising dried up. When they had to go to regular Canadians and ask them to contribute to their party, it dried up.

The Conservative Party raised double what the Liberals raised, and if we add in the leadership candidates, it was triple what the Liberals raised. Would the member comment on whether the only way Liberals can shake down Canadians is by legalizing cash for access?

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. As I said, they got caught with their hand in the cookie jar. Their way to try to avoid being held accountable for that was to lay off for a little while, take it easy, then put up this piece of legislation to provide themselves some cover. When people were not paying attention anymore, they just picked right back up where they left off.

In the meantime, when they have to ask everyday Canadians for money, it is not so easy for them. Their fundraising dropped way off in that period of time. As the member said, it is almost half of what the Conservative Party raised, and when we add in the amounts received by Conservative leadership candidates, it is almost one-quarter of what the Conservative Party was able to raise, because we go out with honest, ethical practices and get donations from everyday Canadians who believe in what we are trying to do.

I can understand why no Canadians would believe in what the Liberals are trying to do, because they are just running the country into huge deficits and debt. They are increasing taxes on Canadians and making life more difficult for the middle class, small business owners, and others, so they do not have any money left to give to a political party. They certainly want to see what the Conservative Party is offering that will make life better for them.

The Deputy Speaker: We are going to resume debate. Before we do, I will just let the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell know that there are only 13 minutes remaining in the time for government orders this evening, so he will get the remaining time when the House next resumes debate on the question.

The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise to speak to Bill C-50, and to have the opportunity to talk about the importance of providing more transparency on how party leaders and political parties fundraise.

I just want to mention a few things about the objective of the bill. It is about fundraising events and applying more transparency to events involving cabinet ministers, including the Prime Minister, which was not there before. It is about including more transparency for party leaders and leadership contestants of parties, which was not there before.

I have to talk about party leaders who are running for nominations because to this day we still do not know who donated to Stephen Harper. Thirteen years later, Stephen Harper has not released the amounts—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The way we work in the House is that we recognize one member to speak at a time. When that member has the floor, I appreciate that some hon. members will have the odd comment and even a heckle here and there, but when there is a constant din of noise it is impossible—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: It is the hon. member's time. I can stand up here and wait until the House comes to order before we continue, and I will be happy to do that. Members are taking time away from their own ability to have this debate this evening. Time is getting on and we know we are getting to the end of the evening and I am sure everyone is anticipating that, but let us hear what the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell has to say, and let him finish his speech.

• (2350)

Mr. Francis Drouin: Just in case they did not hear me, Mr. Speaker, I just want to repeat. In 2004, Stephen Harper was the leader of the official opposition. We did not know who donated to his campaign. To this day, we still do not know who donated to his campaign. We do not know which lobbyists or which stakeholders. We have no idea who donated to the Stephen Harper campaign, and to this day he will not release those numbers.

Here is what we are proposing. We are proposing that any member who runs in a leadership campaign, a prime minister, cabinet member, or any leadership contestants for a party with a seat in the House of Commons needs to release that data within 30 days.

I have to speak about the members of the official opposition who ran for the leadership. I am sorry. I have to bring this back to 2009. It is frustrating, but we have to be honest, and this is about an honest debate. I have to read what I have here. Those members talk about transparency and openness and cash for access, but lobbyists used to host fundraisers for their cabinet ministers, and they were caught. The lobbying commissioner caught them red-handed. I have to read part of the ruling:

The Commissioner initiated an administrative review to look into the file and she also received complaints from Parliamentarians and Democracy Watch—

I was not here in 2009, but I want to thank those members who were here for launching those complaints. Let me go on:

—to look into the matter. In July 2010, following an administrative review, the Commissioner commenced an investigation of the matter. The investigation concluded that Mr. McSweeney played a role in the organization of the event by selling tickets.

Now that is cash for access. If one is lobbying on an issue and selling tickets, that is cash for access.

During the same period of time, Mr. McSweeney was registered to lobby on behalf of the CAC in respect of subjects that fell within the purview of the Minister—

Who was that minister? It was the member for Milton.

—and communicated with her directly in respect of registrable subjects.

Government Orders

It is time to change the channel. We must move on. We have to provide transparency into fundraising events. We have to stop lobbyists from selling tickets to events and allowing ministers to get that cash for access, as the Liberals have talked about. We have not done that on this side of the House.

No member has left this side of the House in shackles. None of our members have left the House in shackles. Our colleague from Niagara has not left in shackles. He is a good member. He has not left in shackles. The member for Cambridge is good member. He has not left in shackles. We follow the law, and that is the important thing.

The important thing is about providing more transparency into this matter, and this is what Bill C-50 is all about.

What do we want to accomplish? Let me read a few important goals that we want to accomplish. Let me talk about some of the issues.

We want to improve the already-strong and robust rules around political fundraising events. We agree that in the past there were some issues with political fundraising events. Of course, we do not agree with \$15,000 and corporations and unions giving to political fundraising. We do not agree with that, but we agree with the limit of \$1,500. It is a great amount. No member could be sold for that amount. That amount was actually established by the previous government, and we agree. We can agree on that amount because it changes the channel. It takes the money away from the influence.

The other issue that we agree about is that Bill C-50 would make political fundraising events more open and transparent to enhance trust and competence in our democratic institutions. If members across the aisle are so against these events, then I hope they can guarantee tonight that no member who ran for the leadership of that party actually held those events.

• (2355)

I do not think they do because we know, on this side, that some of these members held these events. Therefore, at the end of the day, what we want to accomplish is more transparency with respect to political fundraising, which will benefit all political parties, the Green Party, the New Democratic Party, the Conservative Party, and even the independent members way at the back there. It will benefit all parties at the end of the day. I will leave it at that.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the folks at home are watching this late at night, and they are hearing some spirited debate tonight. The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell is a great hockey player. He likes to get his elbows up in the corner.

The reason why this bill has come forward is because the Government of Canada, the members on the other side of the House, were shaking down stakeholders. Ministers who were dealing with various stakeholder were holding fundraisers at \$1,500-a-head. They knew what they were doing. They brought this in because they knew they had to somehow justify these cash for access fundraisers because we saw in the numbers that came out in the first quarter that the Liberal Party numbers dropped like a stone. They dropped like a stone for a number of reasons. However, the reason they could not continue doing what they were doing is because they got caught with

their hands in the cookie jar, like the hon. member for Banff—Airdrie said.

Has this legislation come forward because they want to continue to shake down the stakeholders?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has some very nice golf courses in his area. Smuggler's Glen is a great area to golf. The reason why we are having this debate today is because, to this day, 13 years later, we still do not know who contributed at the fundraisers held by the previous prime minister. Dean Del Mastro left in shackles. Shelly Glover held some fundraisers. She had to pay the money back. She was actually holding fundraisers with lobbyists. Therefore, there was a conflict of interest. At the end of the day, we on this side of the House want to provide transparency, and it benefits all political parties.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been a very interesting debate. Mercifully, I gather it is almost over. I would like to ask the hon. member whether he shares the sense of disappointment that so many Canadians have with respect to this bill, which deals with regulated fundraising events that are supposed to be limited to public spaces by the Prime Minister's mandate letters, which have effectively been ignored in this bill, so we can still have good old-fashioned cash-for-access events in private homes? Does that also cause disappointment to the member opposite?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, the member should ask the leader from Outremont, because he is still holding cash-for-access events at \$300 per head.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Fleetwood—Port Kells made a good point. I also think the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke had it dead right. The previous scandals of the Conservatives lined up against new scandals of the Liberals make for a rather unedifying debate. However, the member for Fleetwood—Port Kells was right to remind us of the robocall scandal of 2011. We never had an inquiry to find out who was behind those calls, which for each single effort was a violation of our Elections Act.

Uncharacteristically, the former member of Parliament for Peterborough, Dean Del Mastro, certainly did break election laws, but there is something about leading someone away in shackles who is not a threat of violence that I think is excessive. I know that may sound strange. He was a member in this place. He violated election laws. He broke trust. He broke the law. However, the image of the shackles was something that I think exceeded the nature of his crime.

• (2400)

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, I agree, but I do not necessarily disagree about him leaving in shackles. If people break the law, they deserve to leave in shackles, especially for election fraud.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell will have five and a half minutes remaining in his time for questions and comments when the House next resumes debate on the question.

*Adjournment Proceedings***ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

TAXATION

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is becoming quite clear that the Liberals have a habit of saying one thing and then doing the complete opposite.

First the Liberals campaigned on a promise to run small deficits of just \$10 billion. I am not sure in whose world that is a small deficit, but that is what they said. Instead, they are running massive out of control deficits. Then they promised they would have a balanced budget by 2019. Now they have absolutely no plan to return to a balanced budget until possibly 2055. Two generations from now, our grandchildren, will still be paying for the Liberals' spending spree and the Liberals will continue to run deficits with no explanation of how or when they will return to balance.

We then had the Liberal broken promise of cutting taxes for the middle class. Instead, what Canadians have is a carbon tax, a huge new tax that will raise the price of absolutely everything, such as food, gas, home heating, and clothing. Everything will cost more. The average Canadian household will pay as much as \$2,600 more per year as a result of the Liberal cash grab.

We have the Liberal broken promises when it comes to small businesses. We have seen the Liberals break their promise to reduce the small business tax rate to 9%. We have seen the Liberals impose new payroll taxes on small businesses.

However, these broken promises do not really come as much of a surprise. The Prime Minister famously insulted hard-working Canadians who own small businesses by saying, "a large percentage of small businesses are actually just ways for wealthier Canadians to save on their taxes..." He is accusing small business owners of being rich people just trying to avoid paying taxes. It is unbelievable.

We have seen the Liberals try to sneak in another new tax grab on small business owners. Financial advisers are warning small business owners that when the Liberals announce new rules requiring Canadians to report the sale of their principal residence to the CRA, this change could eliminate the capital gains exemption on the sale of their primary residence if they run a business from their home. When asked about this, the Minister of Finance refused to give a clear answer.

Now on top of all this, the Liberals are saying that some small businesses are too small to be small businesses.

Active versus passive business income rules, which the Liberal government recently issued a new interpretation of, will adversely affect many small businesses, and are adversely affecting some, such as campgrounds, by arbitrarily assigning them as passive income when the amount of work involved is clearly anything but passive.

Many campgrounds and other small businesses have recently received tax bills that are more than three times the rate of other

small businesses since they do not have five full-time year-round employees and are unable to qualify for the small business tax rate as a result. These tax bills will put many of these small businesses right out of business.

A business being considered too small should not be a reason to exclude anyone from this tax rate, especially when entrepreneurs are often a part of their daily operations on their small businesses and work incredibly hard.

When are the Liberals going to start standing up for small businesses rather than trying to tax them out of existence?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just before I start, I would like to clarify I will be answering the question of February 22, 2017, as was agreed upon.

Before that, the member has talked a lot about Liberal cash grabs and various taxes. I would just like to remind the member that the first thing we did when we came to power was to reduce taxes for the middle class and introduce the Canada child benefit, which has lifted out of poverty hundreds of thousands of kids across this country, and families. If he cares to visit the food bank in his riding or in his community, he will see the impact that it has had, and I am very proud of that. The other thing we have done is that we raised taxes for the richest 1%, and we came back on policies of the previous Conservative government that were, frankly, regressive, such as the TFSA limit doubling to close to \$11,000 and the income splitting, which benefited the richest 10% of Canadians.

To come back to the question that was asked on February 22, I would like to emphasize that protecting the long-term financial security of Canadians is a cornerstone of the Government of Canada's commitment to help the middle class, and of course those working hard to join it. During last fall's housing announcement, the Minister of Finance announced housing stability measures, which included tax measures intended to close tax loopholes involving the capital gains exemption on the principal residence. These measures improved the stability of the housing market, including tax measures to improve tax fairness for Canadian homeowners.

The loopholes being referred to involved, in particular, certain claims to the exemption being made on the part of non-residents, directly or through trusts. The Canada Revenue Agency, the CRA, in coordination with the aforementioned fall housing announcement, announced a change in administrative practice regarding the claiming of the principal residence exemption. The CRA indicated that it would begin enforcing a long-standing legal requirement that a tax designation be filed in order to claim the full principal residence exemption.

Adjournment Proceedings

It is important to note that the CRA has a long-standing practice of accommodating a home office and certain other income-earning activities such as room rental within certain limits. These limits would be in the context of the principal residence exemption. The accommodation is twofold. One, the change in use of a part of a residence from home occupancy to income-earning purpose is not treated as a disposition by the CRA. Second, the gain that accrued on the residence after the change in use continued to be eligible for the exemption. I would like to note that the administrative practice on the change of use has not been modified.

● (2405)

[Translation]

As I said, the government is committed to creating a fair tax system that benefits the middle class and those working hard to join it.

As I mentioned by way of introduction, the government is proud of having reduced taxes for the middle class, a move that will help nine million Canadians.

We are also proud of having brought in the Canada child benefit, which will give an average of \$2,300 more to nine out of ten families in this country. I also talked about that, and it might be one of the things I am most proud of.

Canada's corporate tax system is competitive. The opposition member ought to know that the tax rate for Canadian corporations is the second-lowest in the G7, and its overall business tax rate is the lowest.

We are doing everything we can to ensure that our tax system supports our vision of a fair and prosperous Canada.

[English]

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the fact that nothing the member had to say answered anything that I asked, and it is kind of like question period all over again, he did a good job of reading the talking points that were given to him, so there is that.

The member mentioned as well about the food banks, and he mentioned my riding specifically. I can say that the food banks in my riding are experiencing higher demand than ever. Why is that? It is because of the actions of the current government. We are seeing huge unemployment in my province right now, and we are seeing it because the government has created a tax situation by raising taxes, despite what the Liberals claim, and creating such an uncertain regulatory environment for our primary natural resource industry that they are putting people out of work and out of business. Therefore, we are seeing huge demand for our food banks. The member should be checking that himself.

He also mentioned how people are so much better off. I can say that in my riding that is not what people are telling me at all. They are telling me the complete opposite as a result of the current government.

I would like to follow up on my last point from my first intervention, and that is that recommendation no. 31 from the 2017 pre-budget report of the Standing Committee on Finance recommended that the rules that target small businesses for being too small be changed. The recommendation reads, "That the Government of

Canada recognize the income earned by campgrounds and storage facilities as "active business income" for the purpose of determining eligibility for the small business deduction."

The government did not follow that rule, and the hon. member supported it. If they are successful in taxing campgrounds out of existence, what other small businesses are they going to go after next?

● (2410)

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, the member is saying that I am not answering the question. We are talking about the question he asked on February 22. I have that *Hansard* here. It does not talk about campgrounds. It talks about the CRA and the principal residence exemption, which I answered.

If he does not see the impact of the Canada child benefit in his riding, and he saw the impact of the previous government, which was definitely focused on the wealthiest 10% and 1%, maybe he is not talking about the same people as I am in my riding.

[Translation]

I am going to answer in French. Maybe that will help me get my point across. Anyone claiming a principal residence exemption must now file a designation with the Canada Revenue Agency. Other than tax measures affecting trusts, eligibility criteria for the exemption have not changed for individuals who are Canadian residents when they purchase their residence.

The Canada Revenue Agency applies a long-standing administrative practice of granting the principal residence exemption for a dwelling that includes a home office if certain criteria are met. The measures introduced last fall with respect to residences do not change this approach.

[English]

We will continue to implement the government's plan to maintain the integrity of Canada's tax system as part of its long-term plan to grow the economy, create jobs, and strengthen the middle class.

On that front, might I remind the House and this member that we have created 250,000 full-time jobs over the course of the last couple of months.

HEALTH

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here. I might welcome the folks who are watching this question on Facebook Live. We are on Facebook Live, because it is an opportunity for Canadians who follow my Facebook feed, many of whom live with autism themselves or in their families, to hear the answers we have been getting in question period. So far, we have asked 13 questions.

Adjournment Proceedings

To give a bit of background on the Canadian autism partnership, in budget 2015, the Conservative government of the day funded \$2 million for a working group to establish a Canadian autism partnership. That working group worked alongside self-advocates, an incredible advisory group of seven self-advocates. They worked with the autism community through CASDA, the Canadian ASD Alliance, and met with thousands of Canadians in every province and territory plus with provincial and territorial governments.

We had a vote on this. First, we had a budget ask of \$19 million over five years, which was rejected in budget 2017. We subsequently had a vote in the House of Commons just last week on this issue. Every single Conservative member, every NDP member, and the Green Party voted yes to this, but every single Liberal member but one opposed the Canadian autism partnership.

The Liberals seem to have three talking points. I will address each of them in order.

One is the fact that the government is consulting and having a series of meetings on accessibility legislation. Accessibility legislation is a good thing, and we look forward to seeing what that is going to look like, but I think the NDP member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke said it best when, during debate, he said,

...we have heard yet another one of those speeches that talks about consulting people, thinking about it, working on it later, and finally coming to a conclusion sometime over the distant horizon.

The second thing the Liberals seem to bring up over and over again in their talking points is the fact that the government is investing in Ready Willing & Able, autism surveillance, and an autism research chair. It is important to note that all of those initiatives were put in place by the Conservative government. They really are a legacy of Jim Flaherty, the former finance minister, who was a champion for developmental disabilities throughout his entire term in office.

Third, the talking points seem to refer to the fact that the government has invested \$39 million in autism research over the past five years. Again, that is something our Conservative government was very proud of. In fact, the Canadian autism partnership working group includes four of the world's top researchers in autism: Lonnie Zwaigenbaum, from the University of Alberta; Jonathan Weiss, from York University; Stelios Georgiadis, from McMaster; and Stephen Scherer from SickKids.

What those researchers want in terms of autism policy in this country is for their research to actually be used to benefit Canadians living with autism throughout their lifespan. This is something we have heard time and again. This is the demand from the autism community in Canada. They want to see something that is going to have a real impact on autism policy and early intervention, education, housing, and vocation, all the things that affect people with autism throughout their lifespan.

I hope the parliamentary secretary will not simply repeat the same talking points we have heard time and again and instead will explain to Canadians living with autism and their families why every single Liberal MP but one voted against the Canadian autism partnership.

● (2415)

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, as on the other side of the House, we know that autism affects people from all walks of life and that it has a significant and lifelong impact on both those with autism and their families. To suggest that anyone on this side of the House is insensitive to the struggles faced by those affected by ASD or their families is simply not true.

I would like to work with the member opposite to find solutions and see how we can be helpful on this front. I would more than willing, and I know the minister would be as well, to work with the member to find solutions and move forward.

ASD is already an important part of the Government of Canada's commitment to supporting those with disabilities. The member has mentioned it, but I will reiterate the government's position.

The government is committed to eliminating systematic barriers and delivering opportunities to all Canadians living with disabilities through the development of the planned federal accessibility legislation under the leadership of the Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities. We have recently completed consultations with Canadians on this legislation, and it will be introduced in Parliament in late 2017 or early 2018.

[*Translation*]

We know the challenges that persons with disabilities often face in making the transition to the workplace. Through programs like the opportunities fund for persons with disabilities, administered by Employment and Social Development Canada, we are supporting initiatives that help those with disabilities, including autism spectrum disorder, or ASD, reach their full potential. Through this \$40-million funding program, organizations are helping persons with disabilities prepare for, obtain, and maintain employment.

[*English*]

In partnership with the Canadian Association for Community Living and the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance, CASDA, the government is investing \$15 million in "Ready, Willing and Able", RWA, an initiative that is connecting persons with developmental disabilities with jobs.

We are also providing the Sinneave Family Foundation and Autism Speaks Canada with \$11.4 million for the community works program, which is creating employment opportunities for individuals with autism, by expanding vocational training programs across Canada.

We have also recently committed \$1.3 million to Meticulon, a social enterprise which is helping individuals with ASD find gainful employment by harnessing their unique skills in software testing within the high-tech industry.

We are also committed to filling specific gaps in knowledge related to autism and are making significant investments in research and improving data that are building the foundational evidence base around this condition.

Adjournment Proceedings

Through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, CIHR, the government has invested more than \$39 million over the last five years to support autism research, in areas as diverse as understanding the genetics of ASD to the relationship of ASD to mental health problems and treatment.

For example, our government is supporting the Kids Brain Health Network, a trans-Canadian research network focusing on improving diagnosis, treatment, and support for families raising children with brain-based disabilities. This research network represents a federal investment of more than \$39 million between 2009 and 2019. An additional \$183 million in funding is supporting research in brain health and brain-based disabilities relevant to the ASD community through the brain health fund.

[Translation]

I want to reiterate that supporting families affected by autism requires collaboration across all levels of government and with autism organizations that are working to provide important services and raise awareness of disabilities like ASD.

We will continue to work toward that goal.

[English]

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, that highlights why Canadians have so little faith in the political system.

I like the parliamentary secretary. We get along. We have had conversations before. However, it is clear that he is reading a speech that was given to him by his leadership to explain, somehow, how the Liberals did not fund the Canadian autism partnership. Most of the names of the organizations and people that were named in that speech are part of the Canadian autism partnership working group, which has put forward this advice to government.

What is even more astonishing to me is that on World Autism Awareness Day this year, more than a dozen Liberal members of Parliament showed up on the steps of Parliament Hill for a photo op with families and individuals living with autism. Some even shared some words of support. However, on May 30, when it came time to actually stand and vote in favour of the Canadian autism partnership, all but one opposed it. I hope the parliamentary secretary, with his remaining minute, will try to at least attempt to offer Canadians some explanation of that vote.

• (2420)

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, I have explained most of the government's position and efforts when it comes to autism spectrum disorder. I can tell the member that I have the utmost respect for the work that stakeholders, clinicians, and the families of those living with ASD do, as well as the work the member does on this file. We will be looking at ways to improve research, data, and support for families of those affected with ASD. I will be more than willing to work with the member opposite to look at ways to do that in the future.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pursue a question that I asked in question period not that long ago, on Friday, June 2. I suppose it is now June 9, as it is a bit after midnight.

The context of my question to the Minister of Environment was that just the day before, the President of the United States had claimed he had exited the Paris agreement. In legal reality, which is the reality, the United States is still part of the Paris agreement and remains legally bound by its obligations. The earliest possible date on which Donald Trump can pull the U.S. out of Paris is November 4, 2020, which, ironically, is the day after the next U.S. presidential election. There is no question that the President of the United States intended to do maximum damage to the global effort.

My question for the minister was about what more Canada could do under the circumstances. I named some specific actions. One was to revisit our target, which is still too weak. It is 30% below 2005 levels by 2030. That is the target that was left behind by the previous Harper administration. It is inconsistent with the Paris goals. If we achieve that target by 2030, it is insufficient to fulfill our obligations under the Paris agreement. We need to do much more if we are serious about avoiding a 1.5° global average temperature increase.

The exciting thing that happened in the days since I asked the question, and I will return to the minister's answer, is that, if anything, Donald Trump has galvanized sub-national levels of government throughout the United States to commit to the Paris agreement. Ironically, his rhetorical flourish that he was elected by Pittsburgh and not Paris led to the mayor of Pittsburgh, Mayor Peduto, to say that Pittsburgh is committed to Paris and Donald Trump should not speak for Pittsburgh when he says he was elected by Pittsburgh. He was not elected by Pittsburgh and it wants the Paris agreement to go forward.

There are 211 mayors across the United States who have recommitted their city governments to reducing greenhouse gases, as have more than 30 states. Just yesterday, the state of Hawaii passed the first law in the United States specifically mentioning the Paris accord and saying that Hawaii and state officials are now legally bound to come up with a treaty with plans within the state of Hawaii to meet those targets.

The answer I received from the hon. Minister of Environment was excellent. She said, "If the U.S. administration is going to step back, we are going to step up." However, the only specific concrete measure she suggested was that the House would debate the Paris agreement, which we have already done. She said we would vote on it, and we know how that went. It was 277 to one in support of the Paris agreement.

Adjournment Proceedings

To meet our targets under the Paris agreement and to play a global role that could be called leadership, we need to do much more. Setting a price on carbon is merely a foundational piece. It will not achieve even the weak Harper target. We need eco-energy retrofit programs. We need to make sure that we encourage the transition to electric vehicles far more aggressively than we are doing. We cannot afford to postpone, as the government just did, our methane regulations. We need them right away. We need to do much more and faster on our infrastructure fund. Money that has been re-profiled for after the next election needs to be spent sooner.

In other words, what I am hoping to get to tonight in this debate is the clear understanding that the world is not abandoning Paris and Donald Trump is not going to destroy the Paris agreement, but without more action from governments that support it than what we have declared so far, we will not achieve our Paris targets. Canada needs to do much more than we are currently committed to doing.

• (2425)

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with or without the government of the United States, the momentum around the Paris agreement and climate action is unstoppable. We in Canada look forward to working with many states and U.S. stakeholders, and with partners and communities around the world, to build these relationships while protecting the environment.

I am proud of the instrumental role we played in negotiating the Paris agreement. Today, we are steadfast in our determination to implement our commitments through our domestic efforts, which included the pan-Canadian framework, and through our global leadership, including through advancing the implementation of the agreement.

[Translation]

Canada's historic \$2.65-billion commitment is our largest climate investment ever, and it shows our commitment to global action.

[English]

As a member of the High Ambition Coalition, we want to see more ambitious and accelerated climate action, not less. We want to move forward, not back. We want to build on the exceptional success of the Paris agreement and see the results, not bring the world back to discussions that took place years ago.

[Translation]

Canada will continue to play a leadership role when it comes to climate change. In September 2017, Canada will host and co-chair a ministerial meeting with China and the European Union to move forward on the implementation of the Paris agreement and encourage clean economic growth. In 2018, when Canada holds the G7 presidency, it will give priority to action on climate change and promoting clean economic growth.

[English]

Since forming government, we have worked hard here at home to develop pan-Canadian solutions with provinces and territories.

[Translation]

In the Vancouver declaration, the federal government and the provinces and territories agreed on two essential things. The first is

to implement GHG mitigation policies in support of meeting or exceeding Canada's 2030 target of a 30% reduction below 2005 levels. The second is to increase the level of ambition of environmental policies over time in order to drive greater GHG emissions reductions, consistent with the Paris agreement.

[English]

In the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change, our government, along with provinces and territories, put forward a comprehensive, detailed plan that shows how we will meet our emissions reductions target, a plan that the previous government always failed to deliver.

[Translation]

Our government made it clear from the start that it was taking a very different path from the one the Harper government infamously took, which consisted in setting targets without ever coming up with a plan to achieve them and taking no real action to fight climate change. This has made Canada's targets that much harder to achieve, but we are determined to do so.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the parliamentary secretary for health is here in the wee hours to debate this, but although measures under the current Liberal government are better than what we had under the previous nine years under Stephen Harper, they are not as good as what we had under the Right Hon. Prime Minister Paul Martin. It seems to me that if we could dust off the 2005 budget that was put forward at that time by the minister who is now the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, we would actually have more for climate. We would have eco-energy retrofit.

Although it was in the Liberal platform that we were getting rid of them, we still have fossil fuel subsidies. We now have seen the details on how the pan-Canadian framework will deal with the largest polluters in those jurisdictions that do not have their own carbon price. They are getting all kinds of loopholes. We are letting Nova Scotia get away with still burning coal, and it has weaker commitments under the pan-Canadian framework than it had before.

We have to do much better. While I applaud the government for being more on the right track than the last one, I cannot in all conscience let it off the hook when my children's and grandchildren's future is at stake.

Adjournment Proceedings

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, there is a world of difference between the previous government and our government, not only when it comes to rhetoric, but also when it comes to action.

I want to remind the House and the hon. member of some of the measures we have taken to fight climate change. Canada is doing its part and is a leader on climate change.

We are pricing carbon pollution right across Canada, accelerating the phasing-out of our traditional and highly polluting coal-fired power plants, developing a clean fuels standard to stimulate greater use of biofuels, investing in public transit and electric vehicle infrastructure, putting in place strong regulations on methane

emissions, and taking action on short-lived climate pollutants, including HFCs. We have introduced a lot of measures.

I think what really sets us apart is that we allocated the necessary resources to see our plans through and that our goal is not to constantly pit economic growth against the environment, but to ensure that they continue to go hand in hand.

● (2430)

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:30 a.m.)

CONTENTS

Thursday, June 8, 2017

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Salaries Act

Bill C-24. Second reading	12361
Mr. Ruimy	12361
Mr. Albrecht	12362
Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	12363
Mrs. Lockhart	12363
Mr. Aubin	12363
Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	12364
Mrs. Caesar-Chavannes	12365
Mr. Aubin	12365
Mr. Lamoureux	12365
Mr. Clarke	12366
Mrs. Caesar-Chavannes	12367
Mr. Hardie	12367
Mr. Albrecht	12367
Mr. Garrison	12368
Mr. Hardie	12369
Mr. Godin	12370
Mrs. Jordan	12370
Mr. Albrecht	12370
Mr. Aubin	12371
Mr. Lamoureux	12372
Ms. Moore	12372
Mrs. Jordan	12374
Mrs. Boucher	12374
Mr. Brassard	12374
Mr. May (Cambridge)	12375
Mr. Aubin	12376
Ms. Harder	12376
Mr. Bittle	12377
Ms. Moore	12378
Mrs. Jordan	12378
Mrs. Boucher	12378
Division on amendment deferred	12379

Canada Elections Act

Ms. Gould	12379
Bill C-50. Second reading	12379
Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	12382
Mr. Rankin	12382
Mrs. Fortier	12383
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	12383
Ms. Benson	12383

Mr. Reid	12383
Mr. Fillmore	12386
Mr. Aubin	12386
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	12387
Mr. Brassard	12387
Mr. Rankin	12388
Mr. Drouin	12390
Mr. Reid	12391
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	12391
Ms. Moore	12391
Mr. Whalen	12392
Mr. Brassard	12395
Ms. Benson	12395
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	12396
Mr. Fillmore	12396
Mr. Albrecht	12396
Mr. Van Loan	12397
Ms. Rudd	12399
Mr. Aubin	12399
Mr. Mendicino	12400
Mr. Rankin	12400
Mr. Richards	12401
Mr. Hardie	12404
Mr. Garrison	12404
Mr. Drouin	12404
Mr. Liepert	12405
Mr. Drouin	12405
Mr. Brown	12406
Mr. Rankin	12406
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	12406

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Taxation

Mr. Richards	12407
Mr. Lightbound	12407

Health

Mr. Lake	12408
Mr. Lightbound	12409

The Environment

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	12410
Mr. Lightbound	12411

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